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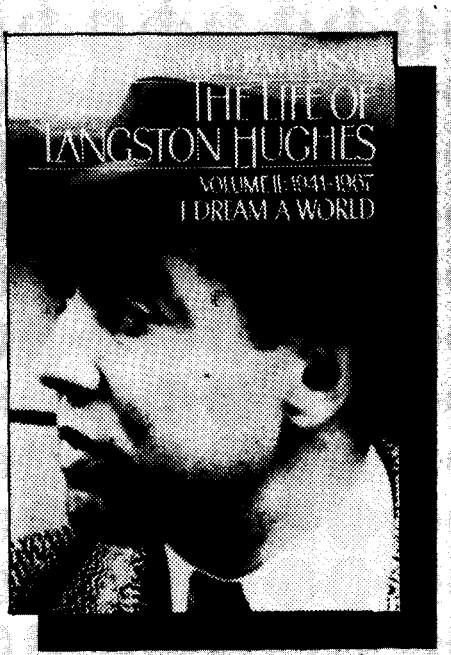

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Short Subject

ARISTIDES

Should you urgently need to reach me, here, to save time, are a few places you are almost certain *not* to find me: browsing happily in the grain section of a health food store, sitting under a dryer reading *Popular Mechanics* during the final stages of a permanent at Vidal Sassoon, pasting up Thank You for Not Smoking signs on firing-squad walls, shopping for a cabana suit at the M. Hyman and Son, Big & Tall Men store. Unless you happen to live in Chicago, there is every likelihood that you have never heard of M. Hyman and Son, where they claim to "suit the big guy at discount prices." I have no doubt that they do just that, but, reading the store's advertising copy, it occurred to me that no one has ever called me "big guy." Nor has anyone ever referred to me, as I seem to recall their female co-stars in the movies used regularly to refer to Clark Gable and John Wayne, as "you big galoot." Not even the very plainest woman, let alone Marlene Dietrich, has ever slung an arm round my neck, drawn me closer to her, and exclaimed, "Kiss me, big boy."

If you begin to gain the impression that I am not one of M. Hyman and Son's ideal customers, you are onto something. Although I have been called many things, I have never been in the least danger of being called Moose, Big Daddy, or Bubba. Quite the reverse; I have always considered myself fortunate to have evaded being called Pee-Wee, or Half-Pint, or Shorty. In a grammar school skit for an assembly on Lincoln's birthday, I, at age eleven or twelve, as the shortest boy in the class, played Stephen Douglas, the Little Giant, opposite the Abe Lincoln of Jack Sheasby, the tallest boy in the class, in a sensibly abridged version of the Lincoln-Douglas debates. This feels like the place in the paragraph where I should insert something like the following sentence: "However, in the summer between my junior and senior years of high school I grew eleven inches to my present height of 6′2″." That summer I may in fact have grown three-quarters of an inch. I kept waiting to "shoot up," in the phrase popular at the time, but never did. Today, at fifty-one, I am beginning to believe it may never happen.

Just how small is this guy anyhow, you may by now be asking. Have I all these years, you are perhaps wondering, been reading a dwarf? I shall set out some figures presently, but first I think it mildly interesting that most curiosity about male height seems to be not about how tall but about how short certain men are—and by certain men, I chiefly mean certain movie actors. When I was a boy there was much guessing about the exact height of Alan Ladd. Figures as low as 5′2″ were bruited about. It was said that Ladd had to stand on a box to kiss his leading ladies. Edward G. Robinson, James Cagney, John Garfield, George Raft, Spencer Tracy were scarcely suited to be power forwards in the National Basketball Association; Humphrey bloody Bogart is said to have been no more than 5′5 1/2″ or 5′6″, sweetheart.

Now it is the height of Robert Redford and Paul Newman that is in the flux of controversy. Evidently neither man will divulge his exact height. One would think that the science of investigative reporting could find a solution to this problem—have Bob Woodward or Carl Bernstein stand next to them and make some elementary deductions. Thus far neither Butch nor Sundance will apparently measure up. Estimates on their respective heights run from 5′5″ to a respectable 5′10″. Both actors are said to be rather touchy on the subject. Upon meeting either of them, it is probably wise not to begin your conversation by saying, "Loved your last flick, little guy."

I am nowhere near so touchy about my own

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height, though it, too, is in that same controversial flux. Nothing pleases a fat man more, said A. J. Liebling (himself a very fat man), than to be called muscular. What, similarly, pleases a short man is to be asked, "What're *you*, about 5′10″?" I was *once* asked, "What're you, about 5′9″?" and I glowed for a full week. I think of myself as 5′7″, but I can't seem to get a clear consensus on it. I not long ago wrote an essay about living in Little Rock, Arkansas, where I have lived at two different times in my life, and in the course of the essay mentioned getting a letter from a southern journalist who remarked that I was a small legend in Little Rock. In the essay, I noted this and my answer, which was to say that I didn't know about the legend but, being 5′7″, I would accept the small part. The editor of the magazine in which the essay appeared, a friend of many years, changed my copy to read "But being *under* 5′7″" (italics mine, vicious tactlessness his), which is what I would call heavy editing.

Unfortunately, he turns out to have been factually correct. A few months later, I had a physical examination, during which I weighed in at 135 pounds and measured 66 1/2 inches. When the physician wrote these figures down, he asked, rather perfunctorily, "What did I say, 67 1/2 inches?" I nodded, lying, and added, "I believe so." I am now down in my own medical records at 5′7 1/2″. But what will happen when I next go in for a physical and it is discovered that I am in fact only 5′6 1/2″? Will my physician feel that I am too young to be losing height so rapidly? Will he order various CAT scans and other tests to be run in search of the cause of my lost inch? Will I be sent off to the Mayo Clinic? Or perhaps to Zurich, where there is doubtless a lost-height specialist, a man I imagine to be 4′11″ with thick glasses and an impenetrable German accent? Complicated stuff, height, and not merely, as the sports announcers are wont to say about baseball, football, golf, and other sports, a game of inches.

Somerset Maugham, who was 5′7″ and none too pleased about it, says somewhere that the world is an entirely different place to a man of 5′7″ from what it is to a man of 6′2″. Maugham's is a telling and true point, so long as one does not push it over into the chief psychological cliché about shortness. I refer to the notion that short people, in particular short men, tend to overcompensate for their size through outsized aggression and ambition. In this reading, T. E. Lawrence, had he been five or six inches taller than his 5′4″, could have devoted all his time to his wretched translation of Homer and let the Turks and the Arabs fight it out on their own. Ambition, ample and aggressive ambition, turns up in every shoe size. In literature, for example, Ivan Turgenev and George Orwell were nice-sized boys; so, in politics, were Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Charles de Gaulle. The theory of compensation, as an explanation for the behavior of small men, comes up way short. (Good old language, it never lets you down.) One of the nice things about having been Napoleon (at 5′2″) is that at least no one could ever accuse you of having a Napoleonic complex.

Not that size doesn't have multitudinous influences on one's life. Although there have been witty big men—Oscar Wilde comes first to mind—wit and humor seem more in the province of the smaller man. Chaplin, Keaton, the Marx Brothers were all small men. We expect a comedian to be small. He may also be fat. W. C. Fields was fat; so was Oliver Hardy. Fat is funny, small is funny. Lou Costello, of Abbott & Costello, was small and fat—a winning comic combination. Tall isn't funny, perhaps owing to its being too imposing, even slightly menacing. Tall and handsome conjoined are especially unfunny. One can always fall back on being the tall and silent type, of whom, in the movies, Gary Cooper was the apotheosis. But if one is small and silent, one is likely merely to be counted shy. Small men are under an obligation to do more talking; perhaps this is why so many among them are always joking.

We all have certain expectations about the physical size of the writers we read—expectations that are often wildly mistaken. One of the nicest compliments I ever received came from a man who, upon meeting me after having read my work for many years, remarked that he expected a fatter man. "You are too slender to be so funny," he said. So delighted was I by the remark that at my next meal I had two desserts. Along the same line, I always thought Chekhov short, possibly for so doltish a reason as his mastery of the short story. (He turns out to have been a bit taller than average and, when young, movie-star handsome.) Tolstoy, whom I should have thought tall, was smallish though sinewy; I have seen him described as a giant dwarf. William James had

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the elongated head of a tall man but was rather short; his body, after that fine head, rather disappoints. I tend on the other hand to think of Shakespeare, about whose height I know nothing, as having the large head of a short man. I recently read that Freud was 5′8″, though he looks smaller, as do all his early followers. No one who has ever seen a photograph of Freud and his circle would mistake it for a photograph of the Los Angeles Lakers.

I should have guessed that Jane Austen was small, chiefly because of the delicacy of her charmingly oblique observations. Wrong again. According to J. E. Austen-Leigh's memoir of his Aunt Jane, "in person she was very attractive; her figure was rather tall and slender, her step light and firm, and her whole appearance expressive of health and animation." In her novels Jane Austen frequently describes the figure and carriage of her characters, and it will scarcely come as a surprise that she held some extremely interesting views about size. Reading along in her novel *Persuasion,* I discovered Miss Austen writing of a tertiary character that her amplitude made the expression of sorrow appear unseemly: "Mrs. Musgrove was of a comfortable substantial size, infinitely more fitted by nature to express good cheer and good humour, than tenderness and sentiment. . . ." Then, to reinforce her point, Miss Austen adds:

> Personal size and mental sorrow have certainly no necessary proportions. A large bulky figure has as good a right to be in deep affliction, as the most graceful set of limbs in the world. But, fair or not fair, there are unbecoming conjunctions, which reason will patronize in vain—which taste cannot tolerate—which ridicule will seize.

The point is quite indefensible, even a little crazy, yet absolutely true: there is something slightly appalling about the spectacle of a large person expressing sorrow. When a small woman cries, she weeps; a large woman, doing the same thing, is more likely to be described as blubbering.

Dorothy Parker, herself a small woman, caught the same point in "Big Blonde," her best story. Her heroine, a former model named Hazel Morse, is a large sensual woman prevented by her nature from introspection and by her many men friends from giving vent to the sadness that so often swamps her. Big babes are not permitted to give way to depression, and Dorothy Parker emphasizes that women of Hazel's kind, who don't mind having a fellow who buys them clothes and maybe pays the rent, all tend to be large:

> They were all big women and stout, broad of shoulder and abundantly breasted, with faces thickly clothed in soft, high-colored flesh. They laughed loud and often, showing opaque and lustreless teeth like squares of crockery. There was about them the health of the big, yet a slight, unwholesome suggestion of stubborn preservation. They might have been thirty-six or forty-five or anywhere between.

The largeness of such women as Hazel Morse seems only to add to their vulnerability. When Hazel fails at an attempt at suicide through an overdose of veronal tablets, a physician, looking down upon her large rumpled body, pronounces, "You couldn't kill her with an ax." There is a line whose jolt could drop a rhino.

If large men and women are nearly condemned to being robust, sporty, and full of high spirits, small men and women, however naturally full of bonhomie they may be, are often thought devious. In literature, treachery is frequently assigned to small people. Many of Robert Louis Stevenson's villainous characters turn out to be small; when Dr. Jekyll transmogrifies into Mr. Hyde, for example, he becomes shorter. I don't recall if Shakespeare ever refers to Iago's size, but no one, surely, would put him above 5′8″. Cassius, of course, is "lean and hungry," but was he also short? An economist with whom I discussed this felt that Cassius is best thought of as having the head of John Kenneth Galbraith, though not quite his 6′8″ frame.

"It's not what you have here," my father used to say, pointing to his flexed bicep, "it's what you have here," he added, pointing now to the right temple of his forehead. At 5′4″ no Kareem Abdul-Jabbar himself, my father was fond of telling me the story of David and Goliath, with its salutary reminder of what a good little man can do. I have just reread the David and Goliath story, and, in retrospect, I'm not at all certain that it offers much in the way of consolation. To be sure, it took real courage to go up against this champion of Gath, "whose height was six cubits and a span"—by my reckoning 9′9″, which makes him likely to have gone early in the NBA draft. David, a youngest son, is described as a "stripling"; he refuses armor, saying he hasn't

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earned the right to it. All very impressive. But the fact is that David got in the first and only shot—"And David put his hands in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang *it*, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth"—and scored something of a lucky punch; some might even compare it to a quick kick in the groin. I never raised this objection to my father. Nor, when he pointed to his bicep and then to his forehead, announcing that it was better to have it in the latter location than in the former, did I suggest, as it occurred to me often to do, that it might be best of all to have it in both places.

By the time I was seven or eight, I suspect I must have known that I was destined to be small and that, consequently, certain adjustments had to be made. Although I was a fairly good grammar school athlete, being small, I knew I was precluded from playing certain positions—first base in baseball, fullback in football—that called for being tall or powerful; I knew that it made no sense to swing for home runs or to attempt to knock the next guy off his feet through clean brutality. Violence as a mode of settling boyhood arguments was closed off to me, except with boys roughly my own size; in argument I would have to rely on cleverness and cunning. No point, either, in developing crushes on the taller girls in the class, no matter how pretty or sweet-natured they might be. By the time I was twelve, it was perfectly evident to me that central casting had not sent me to earth to be a tough guy, or the sort of boy girls would swoon over, or a hero generally. Central casting was a bit unclear about what role I was to play; I would have, over time, to develop my own.

I hope I have not given the impression that being smallish was painful. It wasn't. I had enough up here—see figure 1, not shown, short man pointing to forehead—to avoid ever being tormented or even teased about being small. Besides, I wasn't as small as all that; I was even rather tall for a short fellow. Yet, given a choice, I should much have preferred to have been the toughest kid in the class and the boy all the girls were daffy about. Being small did, however, teach early the lesson that life has its unalterable conditions and limitations. Size, or more precisely height, could not be changed through diet or calisthenics, pills or surgery, or psychological self-improvement programs. Your height is the one card you cannot toss in in exchange for another.

The genius of Sir Laurence Olivier, I have heard it said, includes his ability to act much taller than he is, and to do so absolutely convincingly. I find this most impressive. I do not think myself an altogether unimaginative person; I can imagine myself a woman, a member of other races, all ethnic groups, tremendously rich, completely broke, a Medal of Honor winner, on the run from the police. But what I cannot successfully imagine myself is a foot taller than my actual height. On many occasions I have attempted to do so. The most recent of these was on a sunny afternoon while watching a baseball game at Wrigley Field in Chicago.

Four empty seats to my right sat a man, in his early forties I should guess, shirtless, in cut-off jeans, gym shoes, a dark beard, aviator sunglasses; well soaked with beer, he was regaling four youngish women, who looked to be office workers out for an afternoon in the sun, with loud accounts of his sexual daring and astonishing virility. Had I been a foot taller—6′7″ let us say, if you will permit me to round off that odd half inch in my favor—I do believe I should have spoken to the fellow. Standing well above him, I might have said:

"Sir, I won't trouble you more than a moment. Your charm, I am sorry to report, has worn a little thin, and I must ask you to remain silent for the remainder of the game, with the exception of cheering for the team of your choice and singing "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" during the seventh-inning stretch. If these conditions seem to you too stringent, don't hesitate to say so, for I am sure another seat elsewhere in the ballpark can be found for you—and one I shall be delighted to carry you to, in a state of consciousness or unconsciousness, as you prefer. Do think about it."

A foot taller, might I not develop into a quiet, somewhat well-spoken, bully? Would I not suddenly find myself acting to rectify the many little rudenesses in life I find so wearying? I see myself, in a traffic jam, uncoiling my considerable length from behind the wheel of my car, stepping out into the street, my head high above the ruck, the calm enforcer, the man who straightens things out by speaking in the voice of true reason with just a hint in it of real menace. No, the more I think of it, the more I am inclined to believe my physique is nicely mated to my temperament, given my

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many passions, impatience, and strong opinions. It is probably best that I am not in a position to do much about these things except express them through talk and writing.

This same physique also neatly fits me for intellectual work. Not many university teachers, editorial workers, artists, my guess is, are on the select mailing list of M. Hyman and Son. Only among artists and journalists could Ernest Hemingway have got away with his bogus tough-guy act; the same act, attempted at the construction site or on the assembly line, would have had the old boy in the dentist's chair before lunch break. At most universities, however, it would have gone over beautifully. Outside the physical education department, faculties are not notable for their Olympic muscularity. If a university teacher is not short, there is every chance that he is underweight, overweight, has a slouch, is hiding a weak chin behind an unkempt beard, or is otherwise misfitted or mildly deformed. To walk around a university is to realize that natural selection never takes a day off.

Along with being a university teacher, an editorial worker, a bit of an artist—in sum, a member in good standing of the shorter classes—I am also Jewish. The notion of Jews as puny has been put to rout and final rest by the efficient ferocity of the Israeli army, or at least ought to have been. (Whenever he sees soldiers of the Israeli army on television, the comedian Jackie Mason reports, his first reaction is to think they are Puerto Ricans.) Yet I continue to think of Jews as characteristically short. Despite the notable Jewish boxers, power hitters, football and basketball players, I still think of a good-sized Jewish man as about 5′9″. ("I'm a Jewish six-footer," someone once told me, "you know, about 5′10 1/2″.") A Jew much above six feet tall has always seemed to me overdoing it; he looks out of character, more than a touch odd, somehow slightly out of proper proportion. I think of such people falling into a category I call "Too Tall Jews," which has the same cheerful rhythm as the name of the 6′9″ Dallas Cowboy defensive lineman, Ed "Too Tall" Jones. If the late Harold Rosenberg, the art critic of *The New Yorker*, had not been 6′5″ or so, would his criticism perhaps have seemed less cloudy? If Arthur Miller were not 6′2″ or 6′3″, would his plays have been more grounded in reality? Maybe so.

Forgive me for having dwelt so long on Jews and height, but being both Jewish and short I feel as if I belong to two ethnic groups simultaneously. When I learn, say, that Nijinsky was short, I feel an emotion akin to learning that Walter Lippmann was Jewish: "Ah," I say to myself in both cases, "one of our boys." Is there something similar to ethnic pride that might be called short pride? Not that I am about to begin wearing T-shirts that carry the message Short Is Beautiful, or When You're In Love, The Whole World's Smallish. Yet I am not, apparently, alone in feeling short pride. A friend, who is also short and a baseball fan, recently revealed to me that he has assembled an All-Time All-Star Short Players team, composed of players all of whom are under 5′8″. Some of his selections are not surprising: "Wee Willie" Keeler at 5′4″ was a cinch to make the team. But I didn't know that the great Cub slugger Hack Wilson was only 5′6″. Sure'n it's a great day for the Shortish.

The short have not exactly got long shrift in literature. There is the pathetic Tiny Tim, of course, and Walter de la Mare wrote a novel about a young girl's growing up—or, more precisely, not having grown up—entitled *Memoirs of a Midget*. But most writers do not bother to describe their characters' height, unless it is extraordinary. Nor do most autobiographers mention how tall they are. How tall was Rousseau? He tells us everything else about himself, but not, to the best of my memory, his height. I have always imagined Ben Franklin short and John Stuart Mill tall, but I don't think either refers to his height in his classic autobiography. Nor do I remember Henry Adams anywhere remarking that he is quite short—no more than 5′4″ or 5′5″, I'd say, judging from photographs. Would he have been less sour, I wonder, at 5′11″? Would the country have looked different to him at 6′1″?

Montaigne informs us that "I am a little below medium height" and that, frankly, it bugs him. It is not only a serious defect, he says, but a "disadvantage, especially for men in command or office; for the authority given by a fine presence and bodily majesty is lacking." He quotes Aristotle saying that little men may be pretty but not handsome. Warming to his subject, Montaigne adds:

> Where smallness dwells, neither breadth and roundness of forehead, nor clarity and softness of

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eyes, nor the moderate form of the nose, nor small size of ears and mouth, nor regularity and whiteness of teeth, nor the smooth thickness of a beard brown as the husk of a chestnut, nor curly hair [Montaigne was bald], nor proper roundness of head, nor freshness of color, nor a pleasant facial expression, nor an odorless body, nor just proportion of limbs, can make a handsome man.

It's almost enough to cause a man under six feet to send off for elevator shoes.

Henry James, whom no one is likely to have described as rangy, occasionally mentions the height of his characters, but chiefly, in my recollection, when they are especially small. A secondary character in *The Ambassadors* named John Little Bilham is referred to everywhere in the book as "little Bilham" because of his diminutive size. In *The Princess Casamassima,* the novel's tragic hero Hyacinth Robinson is time and again described as "little Hyacinth," even when he grows to adulthood. I once asked a class to whom I was teaching the novel why James seemed continually to emphasize Hyacinth's smallness. I was able to convince them, through the usual strong-arm tactics, that the answer might be because, given Hyacinth's relation to two women in the novel, James, by stressing his character's littleness, wished to take him out of sexual contention. One of the two women, the working-class Millicent Henning, for example, is always described as large and robust, and therefore any notion of Hyacinth being her lover is disqualified. "How small, exactly, do you think Hyacinth is?" I asked, hoping someone would answer five feet, perhaps 5′2″ at the maximum. "Well, how small is he, Miss Palmer?" I asked, when no one cared to hazard a guess. "I don't know," she said. "I suppose about your size." Ah, another magical moment in teaching.

"Stand tall, soldier," I can recall our elegant, whippet-lean 6′2″ training sergeant Andrew Atherton bellowing, generally as a prelude to chewing out a recruit. Tall, for him as for most people, clearly was an approbative. In bygone movie days, tall was linked up with dark and handsome to describe, say, Cary Grant. Short, dark, and handsome somehow isn't the same. Splendid to be big-hearted, but you don't want to be thought small-minded. You want to be careful, too, about coming up short. *Petty* derives from *petite,* which is of course French for *small.* Small-fry, small change, small beer—all convey the notion of triviality. The word *little* has become an intensifier, applied to people who are not themselves necessarily small, chiefly to add a dollop of contempt or to suggest insignificance, as in "that little fool," or even "what a little monster he has turned out to be." In short (so to speak), the language is loaded against us.

Still, I can recall a time when being tall seemed to have its own drawbacks. A tall young girl was usually a shy young girl, and often today, most touchingly, still is. Tall boys came in two varieties: thin and gangly or thick and oafish. To have been more than, say, 6′3″ in high school and even college was an almost certain guarantee of being ill-coordinated. With occasional exceptions, in sports the very tall seemed to convey an aura of hopelessness. (To be very tall and not compete in sports was, worse, to convey an aura of freakishness.) In basketball, where great height was an obvious advantage, the very tall were instructed to hang around near the baskets in the hope that the ball would fall into their hands, whereupon they could pass it along to someone shorter who would know what to do with it. At a side gym at the University of Illinois sometime in the middle 1950s, I recall watching no fewer than three coaches attempt to teach a 6′7″, rather thickset freshman basketball player how to jump. I felt as if I were watching three trainers working with a bear.

As if to underscore the fundamental difference between the tall and the small, in the Chicago high school system of my boyhood two basketball divisions were created: junior basketball was for boys 5′8″ and under; senior basketball for boys 5′8″ and above. Connoisseurs tended to feel that junior basketball was superior; the players were better coordinated, size couldn't replace skill, the game was quicker and more sophisticatedly played. Junior basketball in Chicago may have been one of the few occasions in all Western history when a substantial number of young males lied about their height—lied, that is, downwardly. Each year there was an official measuring in for junior basketball, and many boys who were 5′9″ or 5′10″, preferring to play junior ball, schlumped and slouched up to the measuring standard, trying to lose an inch or two through poor posture. Many were the stories about boys staying up all through the night before in the hope that lack of sleep would diminish their already modest size. Of

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an older kid in our school named Harry Shadian, who was very kind to me when I was a freshman, it was said that, in the attempt to "measure in" for juniors, he stayed up for two full nights drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes while carrying another boy named Dick Burkholder on his shoulders. The picture of the two of them continues to exert its fascination. While Harry Shadian was smoking and drinking coffee, what, I have wondered, was Dick Burkholder, perched upon his shoulders, doing? Not, I suspect, eating watercress sandwiches and reading La Bruyère.

Not only was junior basketball abolished in Chicago in my sophomore year in high school—providing one of the few serious disappointments in an otherwise agreeable youth—but then, ten or so years later, as if the needle of evolution had jumped eight or ten grooves, suddenly large boys and men became normally, in fact beautifully, coordinated. Earlier such extraordinary professional basketball players as Bob Pettit and Dolph Schayes, both well above 6′5″, had moved with splendid fluidity, and one was occasionally treated to the spectacle of a quick and graceful fatboy on the football field, but all at once it seemed as if there were hundreds and hundreds of such athletes. Now one regularly saw men of 6′6″, 6′9″, 7′, 7′2″, who with an antelope-like bound could spear a fly ball just as it is about to leave a ballpark, or catch up with a man a foot or so shorter who had a twenty-yard lead, or pop into the air with the clarity and tautness of Massine, except that Massine, at the end of such an effort, never bothered to finish off with a three-sixty, double-pump, in-you-face, slam diddlie-do dunk. Such men had names like Winfield, Bird, Strawberry, Magic, and Julius Erving (a name at whose close I always await either the name Horowitz or Shapiro, though it never arrives). These are men who regularly manage feats of coordination that men more than a foot shorter never even thought to attempt. In sports, it has made the old concept of "the good little man" rather obsolete. If one can't at least be more graceful than larger people, what, one has to ask, is the point of being small?

Or, to put it even more blatantly, who needs small men? Certainly one doesn't find much call for them in the classified section. When once briefly unemployed and hence a powerfully close reader of all employment ads, I do recall reading an ad asking specifically for small men—to clean out heating ducts in large office buildings in Manhattan. I regret having failed to apply; it could have been my one chance to be turned away for being too tall. To return to sports, horse racing requires that jockeys be small, or at least light in weight, and diving, gymnastics, and figure skating favor smaller competitors, who have less body to control in the difficult physical configurations these sports all require. I tend to think of great mathematicians—Einstein and Ramanujan are two examples—as smallish men, and so, too, musicians: Beethoven, though stocky, cannot have been tall; Toscanini was distinctly short, and the contemporary composer and conductor Nicolas Slonimsky, in his recent autobiography, gives his height as 5′5 3/4″ (only a short man will take every quarter inch he can get). Psychoanalysts I have met tend to be short, and so, too, violinists. The shortest audiences I know are those that attend chamber-music concerts. Pope, Keats, and Swinburne were all exceedingly short, and so was Dylan Thomas, though, when fully sauced, his height was not the first thing most folks generally noticed about him. Disraeli and Churchill, the greatest English politicians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, were both fairly short. . . . But surely you can feel me struggling here, thrashing around, seeking a pattern.

Character, Heraclitus famously says, is fate, but how does one's size affect both character and fate? Had Pushkin been taller—and he was quite small—might he not more easily have walked away from the foolish duel over his honor as a husband that ended his life when he was only thirty-eight? Taller, would Evelyn Waugh have been, as Cecil Beaton recalls him from school days, "a tiny but fierce ringleader of bullies," for in some sense Waugh remained a small bully all his days. Not all the short tough guys were in the movies. Edmund Wilson, another short man on the stocky model, despite his deceptively friendly and furry nickname of Bunny, often played the intellectual bully. At 5′4″ or so, Milton Friedman quickly makes it plain that he is not a man to be fooled with, at least in economic argument, where he could take your scalp off quicker than you can say Joan Robinson.

Height, if I may go off on a gender bender, is no very big deal for women. To be a woman above six feet carries, I am sure, its complica-

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tions, but small women don't seem to operate under some of the same constraints, compulsions, pressures that small men sometimes do. The petite, moreover, is a category of feminine refinement. Women don't, when young, have to worry about being called Pip-Squeak, Twerp, or Half-Pint. ("Lay off the 'Shorty,' " says a petulant Spencer Tracy to Clark Gable at one point in the movie *Boom Town*.) Outside the duct-cleaning business, short men have never constituted an ideal type, but for a time in American life short women did. In the late 1940s and through the 1950s, the female type of the cheerleader—short, bosomy, full-calved, energetic—was much admired. Debbie Reynolds and, at a steamier level, Elizabeth Taylor represent the type in its Hollywood version. At my high school, they abounded; a few were named Mary Lou, but more than half seemed to be named Bobbie. "They may not be all that elegant," a vicious boy with whom I went to school once remarked, "but they sure hold the road."

For a long while now the day of the Mary Lous and Bobbies has been over. Clothes have long since ceased to be designed with such women in mind, and they have no current representative in the movies. Tall and slender is nowadays the winning ticket, for both women and men. One sees this everywhere, and not least prominently in the elaborately mounted fantasies that are the magazine advertisements of the 5′6″ clothing designer Ralph Lauren (né Lifschitz), which are populated exclusively with lithe and lanky WASPs lounging about in cowboy, tennis, or boating duds. Any man even roughly Ralph Lauren's own size showing up in any one of these fantastical ads is as unlikely as an appearance of the Modern Jazz Quartet at a Hasidic picnic.

Height may be one of the few departments in life where the best break comes with being average. Extremes to either side can be a serious nuisance: to be either 4′10″ or 6′10″ carries its own bedeviling inconveniences—from finding shoes small enough to finding beds big enough. What today is average height is not altogether clear. Like the poverty line, the average height line, one assumes, is going up all the time. When I was a kid, 5′8″ or 5′9″ seemed average height for a man; now 5′10″ appears closer to the average. The higher the average rises, the lower I fall beneath it. It could get worse. As some people grow elderly, their faces become blurry, as if someone had fooled with their contrast button; while others, usually those who are small to begin with, tend to shrink in size. I believe I am going to be one of the shrinkers. I could one day look back at 5′6 1/2″ as my dinosaur age.

Although I have said that I cannot imagine myself truly tall, and although I have gone on about height at such (oops, sorry) length, neither do I tend to think of myself as small, at least not most of the time. Usually I think of myself as I appear to myself in my dreams: a man of average height, neutral looks, and medium build. And so in my workaday life do I think of myself until I stand next to someone quite large—as when I discovered myself, in the Los Angeles airport, standing alongside the 7′2″ Wilt Chamberlain, into whose belt atop immense chocolate-colored velour trousers I found myself staring. At such moments I am brought up (sorry again) short. Yet otherwise I do not think overlong (*oy!*) about my physique and go about heightless and fancy-free.

Despite these disclaimers, I do feel there was something strongly formative about growing up on the short side. I cannot say why, exactly, but I sense that, had I been four or five inches taller, I should have been a radically different person than I now am. Discussing an acquaintance at lunch one day, a friend said to me, "He's the most underconfident tall man I know"—and then he paused, and added—"just as you are the most confident short man I know." That is an interesting distinction, and a compliment with lots of slack in it for interpretation. Does it mean that I am extraordinarily confident *for* a short man? Or does it mean that, given my shortness, it is remarkable that I am so confident. Life, like me, is too short to worry about such ambiguities—and besides, with my confidence, who cares? Yet I do have the distinct sense that my confidence and size, too, are somehow linked. As Emile Zola, Teddy Roosevelt, Lenin, Lord Beaverbrook, Fiorello La Guardia, Picasso, and a few other shortish fellows would be pleased to testify, there has never been a big demand for small underconfident men. Besides, as a man once told me, it isn't what you have here but what you have some place else that counts. And that, Bubba, is about the size of it.

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Feminist Literary Criticism

A Report from the Academy

PETER SHAW

The greatest writers lay no stress upon sex one way or the other. The critic is not reminded as he reads them that he belongs to the masculine or feminine gender.
—Virginia Woolf

ALTHOUGH IT PRESENTS a united front to the world, feminist criticism has long been divided internally and is at present undergoing a particularly far-reaching reassessment of itself. Most of its practitioners agree that a unified theory of feminist criticism has never emerged. One prominent characteristic of the movement, in fact—seen by some as a source of strength and by others as a distraction—is said to be its tendency to internal disagreement over fundamental theoretical questions. Of these questions, the most troublesome is whether or not women's writing differs in some essential way from men's. Without such a gender difference, say those who argue for it, there can be no serious feminist literary criticism. But others insist that the claim for such a difference simply does not hold up to critical scrutiny, and must therefore be abandoned as an ideal.

The debate represents a conflict between aesthetic theory, on the one hand, and the imperatives of the feminist movement from which feminist criticism sprang, on the other. The feminist movement has of course dedicated itself to the cause of women, whereas criticism is ordinarily supposed to represent a primary allegiance to literature. That allegiance, previously tested by political radicals in the 1930s and the 1960s, is being questioned again by feminists, who remain divided amongst themselves on the issue. Ironically enough, those who have put the cause of women before the cause of literature have harbored just enough residual loyalty to literary values to compromise their usefulness to the

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movement. In turn the movement has tended to undermine purely literary values. Can it be that feminist criticism has served feminism badly, and has allowed literary values to be badly served in turn? If so, feminist criticism's relationship to feminism stands out as a major though not often acknowledged embarrassment.

In the meantime, a much-needed assessment of feminist criticism as a whole, preferably by someone outside the movement, remains unattempted. Feminists complain that their work goes largely ignored on account of what they call gender politics on the part of men, but they underestimate the degree to which they themselves discourage serious discussion when they claim to possess an order of understanding not available to male intelligence. A few non-feminist women critics have from time to time examined one or another aspect of the movement, but none of them has attempted to survey it systematically. (Women critics who have challenged feminist criticism include Minda Rae Amiram, Zelda Austin, Joan Didion, Carol Iannone, Diana Trilling, and Joan Malory Webber.) A recent outpouring of histories and theoretical works by feminist critics, though, has made it possible to view the evolution of the movement during its short existence since its beginnings in the early 1970s and to come to some conclusions about its theoretical disputes.*

This essay leaves aside the larger task of evaluating the accomplishments of feminist literary criticism. Instead, concerned as it is with the work of feminist theorists and historians, it pursues feminist critics' own concentration on literary theory, with special emphasis on what is termed "gender theory." To be sure, literary theory, though currently held in high esteem by feminists and others, should not be the ultimate test of literary criticism. First-rate practical criticism has been known to emerge from what later came to be regarded as faulty theory, and so it may one day be with feminist criticism. At present, though, literary

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* Among the books surveyed for this essay were the following:

Ellen Carol Dubois, Gail Paradise Kelly, Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy, Carolyn W. Korsmeyer, and Lillian S. Robinson. *Feminist Scholarship: Kindling in the Groves of Academe*. University of Illinois Press, 1985.

Elizabeth A. Flynn and Patrocinio P. Schweickart, editors. *Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

Elizabeth A. Meese. *Crossing the Double-Cross: The Practice of Feminist Criticism*. University of North Carolina Press, 1986.

Toril Moi. *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*. Methuen, 1985.

Judith Newton and Deborah Rosenfelt, editors. *Feminist Criticism and Social Change: Sex, Class and Race in Literature and Culture*. Methuen, 1985.

K. K. Ruthven. *Feminist Literary Studies: An Introduction*. Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Elaine Showalter, editor. *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory*. Pantheon Books, 1985.

Paula A. Treichler, Cheris Kramarae, and Beth Stafford, editors. *For Alma Mater: Theory and Practice in Feminist Scholarship*. University of Illinois Press, 1985.

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theory so dominates feminist and other kinds of criticism as to have put the question of practical criticism at least temporarily in the background.

Whatever their positions on gender theory, feminist critics agree that it has been a source of recurrent difficulties for them. Largely on account of gender questions, the movement has undergone several changes of direction. These changes are usually described as having followed a three-stage development on the model of a Hegelian syllogism: thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. A failed Stage One is said to have been followed by an opposite, corrective Stage Two that proved equally unsatisfactory. Finally, a Stage Three laid to rest the accumulated theoretical difficulties, gender among them. Stage One, dating to the early 1970s, is described as consisting largely of protest over the traditional depiction of women in fiction. Its practitioners asserted that literature, reflecting deep-seated prejudices in the culture, had misleadingly made women out to be passive and dependent. Attempting to elevate women's status, Stage One critics took it as their task to identify and denounce such characterizations wherever they appeared in fiction.

After a time, the account continues, it began to be evident that the rooting out of negative stereotypes was having an unintended effect. The monotonous parade of passive, dependent women characters, writes Toril Moi, produced a loss of "inspirational force," especially in classrooms. In fact, "depression" was reported to be setting in over "the essentially negative reflection" of women documented by feminist stereotype hunters "in story after story." As Elaine Showalter summed up the problem, such criticism "has a tendency to naturalize women's victimization by making it the inevitable and obsessive topic, of discussion." In short, it seems fair to say that the woman-as-victim approach not only failed to elevate the image of women but degraded it.

The second stage of feminist literary criticism, also dating to the 1970s, is represented as having taken an opposite tack in response to the failure of the first one. Instead of emphasizing the negative, the second stage sought out more acceptable depictions of women in literature. These, it was hoped, would serve as models both for women readers and for contemporary women writers. But the new "role-model" approach tended to concentrate on women authors who had displayed more of a spirit of independence in their own lives than they accorded to their heroines. This amounted to a confusion, wrote Nancy K. Miller, in which critics were reading "a heroine as the clone of her author—a reductionist strategy that has passed for literary criticism on women's writing from the beginning." Miller found that feminist criticism had further narrowed its purview by a commitment to the "authentic" representation of reality. By dismissing literary fantasy and symbolism, its critics had betrayed a preference for literature considered not aesthetically but as a source of historical information about the condition of women.

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In practice, taking such an approach implied an expectation that books would depict women as an oppressed group. Not surprisingly, this expectation eventually came to be judged as "excessively naive." As Toril Moi puts it, asking for women to appear as oppressed "clashes with another demand: that for the representation of female role-models in literature." Literature cannot be authentic and ideal at the same time, for, after all, "quite a few women are 'authentically' weak and unimpressive." Carol Iannone has called this dilemma the "double bind." In her 1981 Ph.D. dissertation on feminist criticism she writes:

> If women writers or characters are too successful, whether materially or morally, they cannot speak for women still oppressed. But if they are failures in achieving independence, they can hardly serve as models for other women.

The critic's double bind can also be seen in the tests applied to fictional heroines in "images-of-women" criticism—the term commonly used to refer to Stages One and Two taken together. These tests have reminded K. K. Ruthven, a male critic friendly to the movement, of " 'the brownie point approach' to women's studies mocked by Marilyn B. Arthur":

> If Medea gets three points for asserting herself and exacting revenge from Jason [Arthur had written], then she loses one for killing her children, forfeits another for using deceit and trickery, another for relying on her grandfather to get her out of the mess, and ends up with a score of zero.

The evaluation of characters in the manner of images-of-women criticism proves, in other words, to be so exiguous that virtually no fictional invention can satisfy it. And the result of such scrutinizing of the characters of fiction, it has to be said again, whether in the form of a hunt for stereotypes or a demand for ideal behavior, is, ironically enough, to make prominent the subject of women's inferiority instead of their equality.

Rather than emphasizing this conundrum, current discussion of feminist criticism tends to attribute the failures of the first two stages to a lack of literary-critical sophistication. The early critics failed in simplemindedly favoring realism over fantasy and symbolism, or they confused the author with her fiction, or they employed crude, point-awarding assessments of fictional characters. These shortcomings are now being said to have been overcome by Stage Three criticism. Though this stage is variously described—no two authorities seem to agree on its definition—it is marked by a new sophistication, thanks to its having adopted advanced "critical theory." This term, which once simply designated theorizing about literature, has of course come to refer to the

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range of French-derived, post-structuralist theories of which the best known is deconstruction. Feminist critics, among others, appear to have borrowed the recherché vocabulary of post-structuralism chiefly as a handy form of certification in today's theory-ridden academy. They have assimilated the post-structuralist challenge to authority, for example, to their own attack on patriarchy. They have also extended post-structuralism's challenge to the literary canon into a call for the inclusion in the canon of more female-authored works. And in their Stage Three criticism they have employed the Lacanian concept of "absence" to rescue the concept of a female writing difference posited by earlier gender theory.

Thanks to critical theory, then, gender difference in writing, after its many vicissitudes under the scrutiny of earlier feminist critics, has returned to favor. In fact, defined as the assumption that "gender is a crucial determinant in the production, circulation and consumption of literary discourses," gender theory has become, according to K. K. Ruthven, the "central hypothesis" of feminist criticism. Yet despite its theoretical borrowings—or perhaps because of them—Stage Three gender theory succeeds no better than its predecessors.

In some of its original forms, gender theory held, without fear of contradiction, that one's ability to produce literature, get it circulated, and have it read is influenced by sexual identity. Feminist critics tended to stress the disadvantages in being a woman, though there can be advantages as well, but this raised no controversy. The trouble came with the attempt to make a case for an essential gender difference in the act of writing. For exactly where, they were forced to ask, can gender be identified as crucial in writing? Does it manifest itself in plot? In style? In setting? It might seem to stand to reason that women writers in the Western tradition, to the extent that they draw from experience, would concentrate on domestic matters and display a special sensitivity to details of dress and interior settings. But this kind of gender identity is decidedly not what feminist critics have in mind.

For a time it appeared that style would yield the formula of gender difference. But feminist critics themselves pointed out that the sex of an author cannot be identified from literary style alone, even by professional critics, and that the same is true of plot. This crucial point alone, demonstrated as it was by objective tests that were examined and approved by respected feminist critics, rendered gender theory unworkable. In addition, some rejected the search for gender difference for purely tactical reasons. The politically radical Toril Moi, for example, writes that "the pursuit of sex difference in language," because it tends to represent women as inferior to men, "is not only a theoretical impossibility, but a political error." Still others have pointed out that the broader doctrine of difference between women and men contradicts both

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feminism's original denial that women are biologically restricted and the related complaint that historically they have been stereotyped as weak in body and mind.

Despite the practical and theoretical objections, some feminist critics have maintained their allegiance to gender difference in writing. One of these, Nancy K. Miller, the critic who percipiently warned against confusing authors with their heroines and who concedes that there can be "no fail-safe technique by which to determine the gender of an author," nevertheless claims to have found a gender difference in plot. Her statement of method is worth attending to not only for its content but also as an example of the kind of diction some feminist critics have been drawn toward under the influence of so-called critical theory. Miller proposes,

> a reading that *consciously* re-creates the object it describes [gender difference], attentive always to a difference—what T. S. Eliot calls "strong local flavor" not dependent on the discovery of an exclusive alterity.

Since the word *alterity* simply means difference, Miller is actually conceding that there is no real difference after all. In logical terms what she posits is a difference without a distinction. But however designated, this non-exclusive alterity clearly falls short of supplying the gender difference posited by feminist criticism.

What, then, does Miller intend by a "reading that *consciously* re-creates the object it describes"? Is she not issuing a license for the critic to supply the gender differences that the author herself failed to supply? If gender difference cannot be found, in other words, let us fabricate it. In similar fashion, another feminist critic, Rachel Blau DuPlessis, evidently frustrated in her attempts to demonstrate stylistic gender difference, nevertheless posits an aesthetic of repetition and illogic as being characteristic of female prose. Then, instead of offering examples, she attempts to incorporate these features in her own prose. She writes: "But I cannot prove that only women, that women only, use this aesthetic. And this failure is actually the strongest proof of all." Elizabeth A. Meese, meanwhile, relies on illogic pure and simple: "If what I say is true, what I say is not true."

Emotionality and illogic, though, are hardly characteristic of feminist critics. On the contrary, their writing ordinarily displays features that they would term "masculinist" or "patriarchal." They do not neglect grammar, syntax, logic, or narrative organization. Their scholarship on the whole is extensively researched, logically organized, and scrupulously footnoted—not to mention that it is often supplemented by annotated bibliographies. Feminist critics, furthermore, have not only

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pointed out the impossibility of differentiating female from male writing but also have analyzed the theoretical inconsistencies of one feminist critical approach after another (providing most of the refutations in the present essay). Some among them nevertheless continue to insist on feminine illogic, thereby promoting another negative stereotype of women.

Such an outcome is the result not of any retreat from logical rigor but rather of a commitment to politics. It was a political allegiance to the feminist movement of the early 1970s that produced women-as-victim criticism in the first place. And it was failure to advance the feminist cause that led to disappointment with both this and the role model approach by the late 1970s. Subsequently, the promise of Stage Three to remedy earlier defects was predicated on its being more rather than less politically committed, which in the 1980s meant following the wider feminist movement's shift from minimizing to emphasizing the differences between the sexes. In order to understand the evolution of feminist literary criticism, therefore, it is necessary to examine the role of politics.

To begin with, politics accounts for the oddly contradictory attitude whereby those feminist critics who exposed the failures of the earlier criticism have never fully repudiated it. In fact, as Carol Thomas Neely points out, the victim and "role model" approaches actually continue in existence, though this fact goes "largely unacknowledged in many of the best-known discussions of feminist criticism." The early criticism is thus at once theoretically dismissed and tolerated in practice. How such a contradiction can be maintained may be gleaned from some observations in an essay friendly to feminist criticism by Cary Nelson. This movement, Nelson writes, is one in which "both assumptions and actual practices potentially in opposition to one another have been left largely unexplored or unacknowledged":

> The reasons for that silence about implicit conflicts are essentially political. . . . By appearing to be ideologically unified, the feminist movement can be more politically effective within the general culture.

The chief considerations, in other words, must always be tactical because the movement is not primarily literary but political.

Feminist critics have been the first to state that feminist scholarship "candidly serves political or social ends." For example, Toril Moi, in her explicitly titled *Sexual/Textual Politics*, writes that "the principal objective of feminist criticism has always been political," and Elizabeth Meese specifies that its "motive" is "resistance in the interest of social transformation through interpretation." This subordination of literary to

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political considerations need not necessarily have dictated the silent toleration of discredited critical methods. But once political considerations dictated such a course, it was adhered to—thanks to an exertion of pressure, once again best described by feminists themselves.

The movement, in Sandra M. Gilbert's words, arose out of "anger and frustration at injustice" that "got italicized into shrieks." Carolyn Heilbrun has professed herself "amazed at how high a moral tone I take," and Elaine Showalter has concluded that in at least one of its modes feminist criticism is "righteous, angry and admonitory." As K. K. Ruthven observes, the "intimidatory rhetoric of radical feminism" is used to suppress certain kinds of dissent within the movement. Dale Spender, though she does not go so far as to adopt Ruthven's term "feminist terrorism," does seem to illustrate through her own experience what Toril Moi describes as "suppression of debate within the camp." Spender reports that she suffered unpopularity simply for "declaring that feminism has no greater monopoly on truth than does patriarchy."

A similar coercion has been directed outside the movement to achieve similar ends. "Our male colleagues," writes Sandra M. Gilbert, "are increasingly reluctant" to express hostility. Despite this notable reluctance, feminist critics sometimes depict their movement as a beleaguered one. In attempting to depict feminist criticism this way, Annette Kolodny is able to cite no more than a passing unfavorable remark by Harold Bloom and a review by Robert Boyers of a book of feminist film criticism. After the appearance of Boyers's review, which Elaine Showalter joined in complaining about (for being "belligerent"), the author of the book threatened *Partisan Review* with a lawsuit, and the magazine was compelled to print a disclaimer in a subsequent issue. Criticism, let alone hostility from a male critic, was not taken kindly in this instance, nor was it allowed to go unpunished.

Jean Bethke Elshtain, writing in the magazine *Salmagundi*, has offered a subtle analysis of how feminist literary thought can result in coercion. Feminism's "sexual manicheanism"—that is, its "universal presumptions of victim/victimizer; innocent/guilty; pure/tainted"—gives rise to a hectoring style of argument. As Elshtain explains, "In order to sustain the mask of purity, the feelings of victimization, [feminist] rhetoric must bear a heavier and heavier burden of rage." Eventually, the criticism no longer represents a genuine cry of protest against victimization. Instead, the "mask of purity" assumed by feminist critics "offers a license to evade the ways in which definitions of 'victimization' are also means to coerce or control."

Coercion requires not only closing ranks to protect admittedly faulty theory like images-of-women criticism, but also passing muster as a feminist. In the introduction to *The New Feminist Criticism*, Elaine

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Showalter endorses Rosalind Coward's requirement that, in order to be judged feminist, books written by women should display a "shared commitment to certain political aims and objectives." Coward added that "reading a novel can be a political activity" in which books are "interrogated" to determine their true commitment to feminism.

But this is not all. It is possible for a woman critic to be rejected even if she passes the initial test. Her writing may still prove to be "an example of patriarchal aggression." The "only" way to "analyse the difference between feminist and sexist" criticism, therefore, is through "a political definition." In practice this has led to a hunt within the ranks for covertly sexist thinking. Annette Kolodny explains the technique of interrogation: When scrutinizing a critic's work for heterodoxy, the feminist asks the question, "What ends do these judgments serve and what conceptions of the world or ideological stances do they (even if unwittingly) help to perpetuate?" In other words, one can trust neither a critic's female identity, nor her use of an accepted technique of feminist criticism, nor even her professed feminism when assessing her usefulness to the movement: politics is all.

Once loyalty and orthodoxy replace the ordinary norms of intellectual discourse, those who enforce the most Draconian standards tend to prevail. Not even the most orthodox themselves, even those who specialize in anathematizing other feminist critics, can feel safe. Thus, Toril Moi finds Annette Kolodny herself guilty of unwittingly serving the enemy. Kolodny is said to arouse suspicion by her "use of the somewhat masculinist-sounding adjectives 'vigorous' and 'rigorous,' " while her apparent belief in objective principles of literary analysis "betrays the traditionalism" of her thinking ("traditionalism" here serving as a synonym for "masculinist"). Moi finds that another critic, Patricia Beer, though she proclaims herself interested in "the cause of female emancipation," unacceptably adopts the ideal of "'value-free' scholarship that feminists denounce as always subservient to existing hierarchies and power structures." For Beer's deviationism she is read out of the movement entirely:

> If feminist criticism is a political criticism, sustained by a commitment to combat all forms of patriarchy and sexism, Patricia Beer's book [*Reader, I Married Him*] is evidently not a work of feminist criticism.

A third critic with apparently impeccable feminist credentials, Myra Jehlen, is allowed by Moi to remain within the fold, but "her acceptance of the most traditional patriarchal aesthetic categories" is called "little short of astonishing in a critic who calls herself a feminist."

Yet not even the abandonment of aesthetic value in the service of a revolutionary political paradigm can satisfy the most demandingly rad-

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ical of feminist critics. For them it is necessary also to abandon the humanistic tradition from which aesthetic value has sprung. "We had believed, I guess," writes Susan Gubar, "that women and men participate equally in a noble republic of the spirit and that both sexes are equal inheritors of 'a thousand years of Western culture.' " Now she knows better. "The treasures of Western culture" prove to be nothing more than "the patrimony of male writers." In the same spirit, Elaine Showalter, whose credentials would seem unassailable, has been criticized as one of those who "fail to grasp . . . that the traditional humanism they represent is in effect part of patriarchal ideology." Showalter has since moved to correct the impression of tolerating humanism by identifying the common "enemies" of all "feminist, black, and post-structuralist critics, both male and female"—namely those who "urge a return to the 'basics' and the 'classics.' "

In the final reckoning, however, Showalter, too, can always be faulted for adopting patriarchal, humanist imperatives inappropriate to feminist criticism. The very use of logic, for those who champion women's use of irrational thought and emotional prose, can qualify as a betrayal. So can "preoccupation with plot," something objected to by Mary Jacobus in her review of Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's study of nineteenth-century women's fiction, *The Madwoman in the Attic*. What the authors of that book are said to have forgotten is that "if culture, writing, and language are inherently repressive, as they may be argued to be, so is interpretation itself." But if interpretation is oppressive, then it follows that there can be no feminist literary criticism—an unacceptable conclusion toward which radical feminists are nevertheless propelled.

Such are the results of what might be termed sexual politicization—that is, the bending of critical categories and arguments according to the needs of the feminist movement. The remaining theoretical difficulties of feminist criticism arise from what would have to be termed *political* politicization: the bending of criticism in the interest of radicalism. Historians of feminist criticism are in agreement that its range of opinion extends no further than the distance from "liberal" to "radical" to "socialist"—a description recalling the socially conscious butler in the Noël Coward play whose mistress proudly remarks that he reads everything "from the *New Statesman* to the *Daily Worker*." Elaine Showalter has stated that feminist criticism's closest "theoretical affiliations" are with "Marxist sociology and aesthetics." But, even putting Marxism aside, Left radical politics have influenced American feminist criticism at least as much as purely sexual politics. And paradoxically enough, radicalism's influence has also pushed feminist criticism in the direction of demoting instead of elevating women.

K. K. Ruthven, writing from an English point of view, traces these affiliations as follows:

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Feminist criticism got under way after turning to marxism to learn how to mobilise an oppositional discourse. It has applied what it learnt so well that it is regarded by marxists as an exemplary instance of revolutionary intervention.

Ruthven's emphasis on Marxism may reflect what Showalter describes as a "closer link in Britain between socialism or Marxism and feminism." But as she also points out, if American criticism started out being less explicitly Marxist than the English form, it has been increasingly influenced by European "radical critical thought" since the mid 1970s.

Radicals have taken the lead, for example, in depicting women writers as victims on account of their exclusion from the literary canon of recognized great works. Accepting this account, other feminist critics have joined them in calling for the inclusion of more women writers in anthologies and on college reading lists. Yet until recently the literary achievements of women were not ordinarily connected with femaleness. Nor did women themselves ordinarily take their sex into account. Thus when Helen Gardner removed nineteen of twenty-three women from her edition of the *Oxford Book of English Verse* in 1972, she was obviously unaware of any issue but that of critical judgment—until she was attacked. (Germaine Greer, objecting to a proposed lowering of standards in women's behalf, praised Gardner's decision.) Inasmuch as women's writing began to appear extensively in print only about two hundred years ago, feminist critics, in common with Helen Gardner, have been faced with the issue of quality. In particular, should they call for the inclusion of the sentimental novels by women that dominated popular literature in the nineteenth century and that made up the bulk of early women's writing? Like literature in any popular genre, most sentimental novels were of inferior quality, as George Eliot (who tends not to be a favorite in feminist criticism) pointed out in her devastatingly witty critique, "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists."

In recognition of the problem, feminists initially treated the nineteenth-century sentimental novel as a sociological phenomenon, being careful to make no claims for its literary worth. But this necessitated calling for the introduction of second-rate writing by women into the literary canon as an act of "affirmative action," creating an impression of women's inferiority once again. Seeking to avoid this trap, the political radical falls into a worse one of repudiating literary values altogether. For radical critics assert that aesthetic standards are themselves a politically inspired imposition in the service of "interests." The privileged classes impose standards in order to install in the canon literary works calculated to help maintain the political and social status quo. Translated into feminist terms, the interests thus served are those of male literary critics acting to sustain patriarchy.

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Crude as it is, the radical argument contains a grain of truth, inasmuch as any standards must to a certain extent be a reflection of the minds that constructed them. If one sets aside the Marxists' conspiratorial notions of class and privilege, it is still possible to observe the cultural limitations of literary standards (which can, in turn, still be defended as objective on balance). This is exactly how politically liberal feminist critics attempted to proceed. Nina Baym, for example, argued persuasively that the canon of American literature came to be accepted over the years partly out of extra-aesthetic considerations. Yet Baym could not bring herself to propose adding women's works to that canon on any but aesthetic grounds. Inevitably, a politically activist feminist critic, Myra Jehlen—still unrepentantly patriarchal in her application of logic—criticized Baym for "having it both ways, admitting the artistic limitations of women's fiction . . . and at the same time denying the validity of the rulers that measure these limitations." For thoroughgoing feminist political radicals, such agonizing over and finally clinging to literary value was no longer acceptable. For "to put it bluntly," as Annette Kolodny wrote, "we have had enough pronouncements of aesthetic valuation for a time."

Under just what circumstances aesthetic value will be allowed to return is not made clear. In the meantime, Ellen Carol DuBois and the other authors of *Feminist Scholarship* explain that the proper approach to the sentimental novel "involves replacing the usual standards of 'excellence' with values that examine the extent to which a work reflects or serves the interests of women." In the spirit of this directive, Jane Tompkins, repudiating the ambiguities and downright aesthetic dismissals of sentimental novels by previous feminist critics like Nina Baym, has recently offered a defense of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a sentimental novel. Also calling in question the concept of "excellence" by placing it in quotation marks, Tompkins asks her reader to

> set aside some familiar categories for evaluating fiction—stylistic intricacy, psychological subtlety, epistemological complexity—and to see the sentimental novel, not as an artifice of eternity answerable to certain formal criteria and to certain psychological and philosophical concerns, but as a political enterprise, halfway between sermon and social theory.

The enterprise of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, for Tompkins, is a women's revolution directed at the overthrow of patriarchal society. By her own insistence, the entire matter has become one of sub-literary, exclusively political interest.

What starts out as sexual politics in feminist literary criticism, then—placing a concern to elevate women's condition before literary consid-

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erations—yields to radical politics, in which women's condition is glossed on a vaguely Marxist model of oppression and exploitation. At each radicalizing step, surprisingly enough, radical politics puts at least as much emphasis on gender as sexual politics did, advancing with equal if not greater insistence the ideas of a separate women's sensibility, a separate women's writing style, and a separate women's literary criticism. Moreover, where sexual politics had demanded ever more Draconian denials of specific literary values, radical politics demands the abandonment of literary value altogether. Where sexual politics resulted in a second-class status for women in literature, radical politics effectively fixes their status altogether beneath the level of literature. Radical politicization, in other words, escalates the demotion of women as writers and critics, and then treats apostasy with even greater severity than had merely sexual politics.

When sexual and radical politics come together, feminist critics can set upon one another with ferocity. For example, from a sexual and radical point of view not yet mentioned, the radical feminist critics so far discussed have themselves been accused of positive complicity in the oppression of women. To the lesbian feminist literary critic, they are all simply part of the "heterosexist academy." When lesbian-political tests are applied, it is seen that "heterosexist assumptions abound in literary texts, such as feminist literary anthologies, that purport to be open-minded about lesbianism." Not surprisingly, therefore, "one strain in lesbian feminist criticism" is dedicated to "unmasking" feminist criticism for the way that it ignores lesbians. As it does so, it finds that "some of the books that develop the idea of female tradition are openly homophobic, employing the word 'lesbian' only pejoratively."

Here, then, is another resentful group of female literary critics with sexually and politically determined objections—this time directed at the prejudices of feminist criticism itself, whose fundamental assumptions its members regard as sexist. Feminist criticism had held that oppressive constructs such as the traditional canon of literature and the aesthetic values that support it derived from the peculiar characteristics of men and their system of patriarchy. According to lesbian feminist theory, though, the same proclivity for erecting oppressive structures can be observed among women—indeed, the worst attitudes arise precisely among feminist literary critics (as well as in "contemporary feminist fiction," which, "by perpetuating stereotyped characters and themes . . . serves to 'disempower the lesbian' ").

Feminist literary critics, like the male academics reluctant to express hostility to *them*, have responded to the lesbian attack with embarrassment, apologies, and tokenism. Lesbians are included but often segregated at feminist conferences and in anthologies. They have been shown

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acquiescence but not granted the radical reordering of literary sensibility they demand. Not that such a reordering would end the matter. For feminist critics, including even those taking a lesbian stance, would remain vulnerable to the complaints of yet another group of feminist women in literature: black feminist critics.

These critics, too, are "enraged," inasmuch as "books by black women" have been "misunderstood" and thereby "destroyed" by feminist critics. Some black critics have gone beyond the feminist rejection of white male discourse to the rejection of feminist discourse itself on the grounds that critical categories based on analyses of white women characters are Euro-American in derivation. Black feminists believe that they have suffered as well from "the racism of white lesbian feminist theory," a complaint in which they are joined by black lesbian feminist critics. The feminist critics who have been attacked, once again resembling male critics, have offered only the feeblest of responses to these charges. It is hardly sufficient for Elizabeth A. Meese to confess "my complicity as a white academic feminist," for example, or for Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak to write defensively that "the effort to put First World lesbianism in its place is not necessarily reducible to pride in female heterosexuality."

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's uneasiness suggests that, to be safe from recrimination, a feminist critic at the present moment would need to have not only Third World credentials like her own (or credentials as a black or "Chicana" woman), but also be a lesbian, and preferably a Marxist or at least a *soi-disant* radical at the same time. Ordinary feminist literary critics can too easily be assailed as heterosexist, homophobic, racist, or guilty of "cultural imperialism." On the other hand, lesbian and black critics have found their own respective schools theoretically inadequate. Each started out by attempting to define unique characteristics by which a lesbian or black lesbian author's writing might be distinguished. But female heterosexual writers sometimes also fit the attempted definitions—along with certain male writers—while certain lesbian writers did not. With black lesbian writing, not only did certain heterosexual black female writers fit the attempted definitions but "there are probably a few Black male writers who qualify as well."

The sexually and politically ideal writer, it can be concluded, like the ideal critic, can never be found. Yet although in the end the fate of race difference in writing has been the same as that of gender difference—refutation by feminists themselves—demands for sexual and political purity have kept rising. And the more radical the politics, the greater has been the need to assert a biological difference of one or another kind. Once again ignoring the case against female difference in writing style, the most radical feminist critics have argued that women writers and

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readers differ from men not only in that they prefer to be less logical, but also because they are intrinsically less coherent intellectually. The gender difference that produces this result, they assert, derives from women's speech. Unlike men, the argument goes, women speak without purpose. They "chatter," going "off in all directions." They vaguely assign sentimentalized values to people and things, as in their unique use of the words *sweet* and *divine* as unironic terms of praise. In a corresponding manner, women's writing, according to radical critics, programmatically neglects grammar, syntax, logic, and narrative organization.

Appropriately, it has fallen to the French, who have developed the most politically radical tendencies in feminist criticism, to make the most intransigent theoretical case for the proposition that women are weak-willed and weak-minded. Women's chemical and physical makeup, explains Luce Irigaray, a prominent French theorist, renders them "temperamental, incomprehensible, perturbed, capricious." Women writers, the French critic Julia Kristeva asserts, for these reasons function primarily as "hysterics," and their prose should be traced to "the predominance in them of drives related to anality and childbirth." Under the influence of post-structuralism, these critics have managed to arrive at the paradoxically reductive assumptions of what Toril Moi characterizes as "clear biologism"—the proposition that women's biological makeup dictates how they think, read, and write. Not hesitating to follow the biological imperative all the way, they have arrived at yet another characterization of women virtually identical with the hoariest of stereotypes.

Drawing on a second notion from Jacques Lacan—his characterization of the phallus as "the primary signifier"—French criticism does not hesitate, either, to ask the logical question (in the words of Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar): "If the pen is a metaphorical penis, from what organ can females generate texts?" The reply—that it must be the female genitalia—appears evident enough and has been widely accepted. (Hélène Cixous, it is true, employs an alternate "Kleinian analysis of the mother's nipple as a pre-Oedipal penis image," but she has been faulted for a superficial willingness to "happily integrate both penis and nipple.") Still, once the female genitalia are agreed upon, just which part should be "privileged"? At this point in the argument, the escalation of terms continues in a most baroque fashion. For on the hermetic battleground of the female genitalia, too, are to be found a political Left and Right, patriarchy, imperfect feminism, and finally an ideal radical stance based on the one correct attitude toward the parts of the anatomical structure in question.

Luce Irigaray champions the vulva. In her theoretical system the

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unique experience of pleasure derived from the labia, "two lips which embrace each other continuously," is the basis of the self-indulgent, illogical thinking and writing—"*jouissance*"—that should and will become characteristic of women. K. K. Ruthven has pointed out that uncircumcised men can be said to experience in their foreskins comparable self-stimulation to the two lips of the vulva, but this theoretical objection has apparently not yet been dealt with.

An American, Naomi Schor, holds that Irigaray tends " 'to valorize the vagina' at the expense of the clitoris"—an evidently more weighty objection. Schor seems to be suggesting that such "valorization" falls into the patriarchal habit of delegitimizing the clitoris—something radical feminists have taxed other feminists with in the past. Schor calls on feminist critics to correct the shortcomings of Irigaray's approach by developing a "clitoral hermeneutics." But here radical politics proves to be at odds with itself. For even before such a project can be completed, a political objection has already been raised by other feminists—namely that *jouissance*, whether it be clitorally or labially derived, excludes Third World women who have undergone clitoridectomies. Irigaray's vaginal criticism, in any case, like other feminist theories before it, has been dismissed as "completely under the influence of patriarchal ideology."

To be sure, some feminist critics have not failed to remark on the paradox of confirming the very stereotype of women as weak-willed and weak-minded that the movement began by denouncing. They warn that the French or any other model of illogical female thought and writing leads toward a return to patriarchy. Raising such an objection, though, risks the appearance of naiveté. One must display an awareness that the allusive, punning style in which French radical feminists, elaborately and with exaggeration, advance the stereotype of the illogical woman is intended partly as a "transvaluing" of the stereotype—a reversal, rather than a confirmation, of its implications.*

The French, furthermore, do not exactly claim that women's writing is at present an expression of the female body: their biologic formulation is advanced only as a prospective and utopian construct. Other feminists have nevertheless perceived a danger in positing the biological determinism of women's writing. Yet having done so, they stop short of

*Taking their cue from the French, some feminist literary critics have gravitated toward making puns, usually based on literary terms. Male thinking is the most frequent target, though the puns may be derived from male authors. The expressions include "phallacy," "Phallocracy," and "phallogocentrism" (from Derrida). One understands that "manglish" and "hismeneutics" are to be replaced, for the previously "immasculated" female reader, by "sisspeak" and "sapphistry"—or more vulgarly, by the "*con*centric," by "con-texte," and by "Gyn/Ecology" (italics in original).

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dissociating themselves from the French. Once again, it appears, the demands of solidarity, this time thanks to the powerful lesbian, post-structuralist, and politically radical credentials of French feminism, have triumphed over literary judgment.

It may well be asked how the spirit of feminist solidarity differs from the tolerance normally extended by literary criticism to a range of opposing viewpoints. For that matter, what is the objection to bias itself, inasmuch as it has always been an accompaniment of literary criticism (in common with other kinds of investigation)? The answer is that there is a crucial distinction between intended and unintended bias—between being inadvertently influenced by politics and choosing subordination to its aims and principles. Feminist critics elevate a deficit into a principle when, observing breaches of objectivity in others, they adopt the same failing in the service of their cause.

What has been forgotten is that the value of the literary critical enterprise does not lie in its ability to perform any direct services to society. On the contrary, for the most part criticism operates within an enclosure, and in this space the highest value is aesthetic. By the measure of social needs, the aesthetic would have to be rated low on the scale of values, yet in literature it represents the equivalent of morality. In a similar way, literary criticism substitutes for the pursuit of truth the pursuit of a satisfactory account of the aesthetic object. Literary criticism may never achieve a perfect account, but in attempting to reach one it imitates moral action. The absence of such an attempt is what makes it appear to us that something is amiss when a critic consciously adopts a bias—just as we are disturbed by cheating at cards. In both situations we sense analogies with actual social morality.

Feminist critics, though, have repudiated the morality of the aesthetic. Seizing on the post-structuralist argument that we can never achieve objectivity, or on the Marxist argument that all taste reflects social conditioning, they have justified their subordination of literary values to the needs of the women's movement, or of radical politics, or both. Until and unless feminist criticism commits itself to aesthetic value, one can predict, it will continue to turn in on itself, repudiating one stage after another of necessarily inadequate theory.

In view of the internal pressures against such a change of heart within feminist criticism, it may seem churlish to quarrel with those few American feminists who have been intrepid enough to challenge the biologic extremism of radical French feminism. Yet when couched as a warning against the danger of a return to "patriarchy," this defense of women's dignity prompts the question of whether traditional society ever really went so far in denigrating women as feminist criticism itself has gone. In the past, surely, stereotypes of the sexes were understood as

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tendencies, not absolutes. When men and women were stigmatized, it was typically because of their occasional, not their immutable, vulnerabilities. In feminist criticism, by contrast, women have come to be defined almost exclusively by their putative limitations.

Striking as the failure of feminist criticism is, with its seemingly fatal tendency to denigrate rather than elevate women, it is not the first literary movement to have suffered from its own theory. A comparably tortuous path of self-contradiction can be traced in the development of Marxist criticism in this century. In fact, Marxist criticism preceded the reversals of feminist criticism when it moved from the espousal of (socialist) realism to an embrace of its opposite in the deconstructive assault on reality. With Marxist and feminist criticism alike, the tergiversations and self-contradictions, the mutually recriminatory denunciations for straying from orthodoxy stem not from incompetence but from the primacy of politics.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the extremes of critical self-contradiction in feminist criticism tend to correlate with extreme politicization, as in the case of the French feminists, most of whom are declared Marxists. But what of liberal as opposed to radical criticism? In common with other movements, feminism deserves to be judged by how the representatives of its central tendency deal with the challenges of extremists. From this point of view, it has to be said that when it comes to French structuralist biologism, to Marxism, white and black lesbianism, and other radical forms of expression, mainstream liberal feminist criticism has allowed itself to be taken intellectually hostage. By subordinating literary critical values to considerations of political solidarity and a desire not to insult political radicals, it has made itself complicit in radical feminism's most damaging tendencies.

The final question to be asked is what effect the emergence of feminist literary criticism will have on literature and literary criticism in the long run. It may well be that, thanks to its unsupportable claims to a unique aesthetic and a separate language, feminist criticism will remain a largely isolated phenomenon. On the other hand, its implications that women have played minor roles as writers and incompetent ones as critics seem destined to hang in the air for some time to come. By positing the theory of a separate, yet-to-be-recognized women's tradition of writing, feminist criticism has had and will continue to have the effect of excluding women from literature—and not only from literature. For, by asserting that language is for women "something like a foreign tongue," feminist criticism denies them their role in the development of human speech. From yet another point of view, feminist criticism cannot logically credit women with a significant role in any other phase of human cultural development because, if it did, then the conclusion

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might follow that "gender identity and ideologies of gender" were "created by women as well as men" (something Marxist feminists do allow). In all of these ways feminist literary criticism surrenders to men the characteristics and habits of mind by which the progress of civilization has always been driven. The world's scientific and cultural progress to date is in effect attributed to men and mankind's future prospects assigned to their exclusive care.

The one broad avenue to participation in the life of the culture always thought to have been open to women—literature's noble republic of the spirit—is in one way or another effectively denied women by feminist criticism. Yet it was through literature that Mary Ann Evans, writing as George Eliot, could confront her world unfettered by any limitations that might be thought to attach to her as a woman. Through literature Emily Dickinson and Willa Cather were free to write poems and stories in which the "I" who speaks is male rather than female, thereby claiming their privilege to speak for any kind of human being their imaginations were capable of grasping. Feminist critics, in contrast, would in the name of liberation circumscribe women's participation in literature in exactly the fashion that they imagine women to have been circumscribed by society. In the determinedly enlightened atmosphere of our present literary culture, it hardly seems possible that a movement whose effect is thus to denigrate women could be tolerated. Yet in a field where women's excellence is incontestable, feminist literary critics, starting out in the conviction that women writers had long suffered at the hands of male critics, have ended up fostering an image of women at least as insulting as any that they set out to protest.

Jay Saunders Redding

1906–1988

Member, THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR *Editorial Board,*
1951–1963; 1970–1975

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Twentieth Anniversary

LOIS SHAPLEY BASSEN

Under the bed is the unframed wedding portrait
of a twenty-one-year-old girl with silk flowers
for the photographer. From my blue eyes no fate
gleams out, on my lips the screaming hours
of the future are not even whispers yet.

The floor-length gown and lace-trained cap are grey
in the photograph, were beige and pearl in real life.
Bridal portraits like old movies wisely set
their faces against reality by refusing color's noise.
I stand there still, ready to become a wife,
unblinking, unsmiling, the portrait of pale poise.

What I looked out blindly upon then were years
of daily work, distant war, music on the stereo,
saving money for a house, childlessness, new fears
reinvented when late babies finally came, and the radio
in the station wagon playing a remembered song.

Under the bed is the unframed wedding portrait
of the young bride my daughters are surprised to find.
"Mommy, you were so pretty then and so young!"
And I am surprised to remember what was in my mind
before this brief generation of the sun.

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Prosaics

An Approach to the Humanities

GARY SAUL MORSON

IT IS A MELANCHOLY FACT that the best minds in the humanities have long been engaged in a series of futile debates. Two schools of thought stake out ever more extreme versions of their own positions, as each responds to the other's proofs that it is untenable. The accusations of each are correct, but neither can conceive of any alternative to its own entrenched position and style of thought.

A critic might be tempted to label one school "semiotic totalitarianism," and the other, its deathless enemy, "village relativism." Proponents of the first school assume that to understand any part of culture one must devise a system capable of explaining every part of it. All of human experience is subject to the system's totalitarian order. These thinkers assume that nothing is innocent of meaning and that all actions, events, or artifacts are signs that their system alone can decode; their mania for treating everything in terms of an occult language might be called "semiotic," although "cryptographic" might be just as apt. Naturally, Freud and Marx, who are read as offering keys to the psyche and the social world, are currently the great heroes of these thinkers.

The village relativists invariably detect metaphysical and epistemological errors in their adversaries' thought. The relativists agree that explanations are all-embracing systems but deny that such systems are possible. With a jargon no less daunting than their opponents', they repeatedly find new ways to demonstrate a rather simple point—that one can't know anything with certainty—and, completely illogically, they go on to conclude that one therefore can't know anything at all.

The most influential relativists have for some time denied the very existence of facts. They arrive at this curious position *not* by pointing to bias in all our perceptions. That rather moderate form of skepticism

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doesn't go far enough, because, after all, the very word *bias* might imply the possibility of something or someone without bias. No, these relativists argue that there are no "facts" because what we call facts are entirely the product of our individual or social interests, and therefore are entitled to no special "privilege." Adopting this form of relativism, one recent thinker has recommended that historians just invent whatever story best suits their political purposes, since there are no facts to violate anyway. Perhaps one is tempted to argue against such an approach on the grounds that it is illogical, because, after all, history is by definition a matter of facts. To this, any good modern relativist will supply the stock answer: logic itself enjoys no privilege, because it is just another form of rhetoric. The ease with which these thinkers can manufacture a reply to any objection prompts the name "village relativism," by analogy with village atheism.

Naturally, these two schools talk past each other. Semiotic totalitarians can always detect some form of bourgeois decadence or inner drive to repression in their opponents. For their part, the village relativists invariably uncover incriminating evidence that their opponents actually believe in something. Each group vies for a position "lefter than thou": one tends to the political left, the other to the epistemological "left" of radical nihilism.

There is an alternative to this endless oscillation of absolutes and absences. I call this alternative "prosaics," and in this essay I will sketch its implications for current thought. Coiners of neologisms have a special freedom in defining them, so I will stipulate at the outset that "prosaics" has two closely related meanings. It is, first of all, a way of thinking about human events that focuses on the ordinary, messy, quotidian facts of daily life—in short, on the prosaic. As it happens, this form of thinking also offers a reason to take novels with renewed seriousness: of all literary forms, novels are best able to capture the messiness of the world. Thus, the second meaning of "prosaics," which is opposed to "poetics," suggests an approach to verbal art that focuses not on epics or lyrics or tragedies, but on the novel and other forms of prose. Prosaic facts have been best represented in prosaic art.

As a way of thinking about the cultural world generally, prosaics does not presume that behind all apparent disorder there lies a hidden order or system. It resists the impulse of semiotic totalitarians, who try to think away disorder by treating it as governed by an order not yet fully identified. On the contrary, prosaics assumes that the natural state of the world is mess, and that it is order, not disorder, that requires an explanation. Order does exist, of course, but it is always the result of work. It is never given, but always made.

The anthropologist Gregory Bateson captured this prosaic insight in

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one of his splendid dialogues between himself and his daughter. Bateson called his dialogues "metalogues," because their shapes illustrate their themes, and in "Why Do Things Get in a Muddle?" father and daughter muddle and meander their way to a series of prosaic insights. "People spend a lot of time tidying things," the daughter observes, "but they never seem to spend time muddling them. Things just seem to get in a muddle by themselves." If one pays no particular attention to what one is doing, tidy things get messy, but messy things never tidy themselves. Why?

Bateson at last arrives at an answer, one that is disarmingly simple: there are an infinitely large number of ways in which things can be messy, but very few that one would call tidy. His daughter expresses dissatisfaction with this explanation, because she feels that there must be a reason, some sort of active force for disorder. Bateson answers that it is order, not disorder, that requires a reason in that sense:

> D[aughter]: Daddy, you didn't finish. Why do things get the way I say isn't tidy?
>
> F[ather]: But I *have* finished—it's just because there are more ways which you call "untidy" than there are ways which you call "tidy."
>
> D: But that isn't a reason why—
>
> F: But, yes, it is. And it is the real and only and very important reason.
>
> D: Oh, Daddy! Stop it.
>
> F: No, I'm not fooling. That is the reason, *and all of science is hooked up with that reason.*

Whether or not all of science is hooked up with that reason, all of prosaics is. The natural state of the world is mess.

By contrast, consider Freud's assumption that everything in the psyche operates according to a complex system in which no accidents whatsoever are possible. Slips of the tongue and the forgetting of facts, however trivial, are always "Freudian": they result from a disguised "intention to forget." Characteristically, Freud moves from the insight that some errors serve a purpose to the insistence that all do. "Since we overcame the error of supposing that the forgetting we are familiar with signified a destruction of the memory trace—that is, an annihilation," he writes in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, "we have been inclined to take the opposite view, that in mental life nothing which has once been formed can perish—that everything is somehow preserved and that in suitable circumstances . . . it can be brought to light." Prosaics replies: why should we assume that the human mind is that efficient? Can it really be that each act of forgetting must be purposeful and requires work? If the natural state of the mind is mess, then most forgetting and errors result from the simple inefficiency of all things human. The

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burden of proof goes the other way. Memory requires a reason, and perhaps the forgetting of some things requires a reason. But the mere fact that I cannot remember every speck of dust on the way to work does not mean I intend to forget it.

The political analogue to Freudian logic is conspiracy theory. Such theorists hold that if you can identify a social problem, then you can identify someone or some group who planned it; and if no one can be proved to have planned it, then that only shows how effectively the conspirators have suppressed the evidence. In 1937, a trial in Switzerland established conclusively that the most famous modern conspiracy document, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,* was a forgery, but the proof did no good at all. Its Nazi circulators then and its leftist ones now simply argue that the trial itself proves the extent of the Elders' influence. If one argues with a Marxist, one must be doing so from class interests; if one argues with a Freudian, it must be from a desire to avoid the painful truth. Marxists sometimes resort to another version of conspiracy logic: if no one can be identified as the conspirator, then the conspiracy nevertheless exists "objectively." The idea that history doesn't fit a system is dismissed out of hand.

It was against just such system-mongering that the greatest thinkers of the prosaic tradition rebelled. Perhaps the greatest of them, Leo Tolstoy, sidestepped the whole debate over which system guaranteed social progress; rather, he denied that history was systematic at all. "I see no reason whatsoever to seek out general laws of history, not to mention the impossibility of doing so," Tolstoy wrote. He saw that the thought of his time "from Hegel to Buckle" presumed that behind the chaos of daily events there must be some pattern. And he dedicated *War and Peace* to disputing that notion. Just in case readers missed the point, he violated novelistic decorum by including several essays demonstrating the logical fallacies behind all historical systematizing.

In the novel's councils of war, Tolstoy's generals and rulers always presume that a good plan will anticipate all contingencies. The wiser characters learn that battles, and all other historical events, are the product of "a hundred million diverse chances," the result of an indefinitely large number of causal lines reducible to no pattern whatsoever, even in principle. Sometimes events happen for a specific reason, but sometimes they happen just "for some reason" (one of Tolstoy's favorite phrases). The philosophers assume that history is a riddle and that it can be solved; but for Tolstoy, as for Ludwig Wittgenstein, a man who learned so much from him, "the *riddle* does not exist" (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* 6.5).

Tolstoy's wisest characters give up the quest for certainty and instead seek ways of orienting themselves to act effectively in a world of

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contingency. The wisest general in *War and Peace*, Kutuzov, sleeps through councils of war, not to show contempt for his fellow officers, as some of them assume, but rather because he knows that war is too unsystematic for late-night planning to be of much use. In fact, it could actually hurt, he reasons, because in a world of uncertainty alertness to the essentially unpredictable events of the moment is the most valuable tool. The best preparation for a battle, Kutuzov suggests, is "a good night's sleep."

War and Peace also illustrates another characteristic of prosaic thought. In contrast to most great systems, prosaics questions whether the most important events may not be the most ordinary and everyday ones—events that we do not appreciate simply because they are so commonplace. To adapt Abe Lincoln's saying, God must have loved the ordinary events because he made so many of them. Cloaked in their very ordinariness, the prosaic events that truly shape our lives—that truly *are* our lives—escape our notice. The truths we seek are hidden in plain view, and for that reason are all the more difficult to discern.

Most historians and philosophers tend to focus on the big events—on wars, revolutions, dramatic incidents, critical choices, and decisive encounters. Individual people, too, tend to tell themselves the story of their lives in terms of exceptional events and big decisions. But what if the important events are not the great ones, but the infinitely numerous and apparently inconsequential ordinary ones, which, taken together, are far more effective and significant? After all, memorable events are memorable just because they are exceptional. To imagine that they are important just because they are memorable and noticeable would be like concluding that because only treetops are visible on a distant hill, nothing exists there but trees (to use one of Tolstoy's analogies).

It is often the small items in the background of old photographs that most powerfully evoke elusive memories of the past. The things barely noticed at the time and included only by chance may best preserve the feeling of life as it was lived. The furniture long ago discarded, a spot on the wall, a picture we had long ignored but that now suggests the habitual life we lived beneath it—these small items remind us of how it felt to live in a room. The intended subject of a photograph can seem much less important in comparison with its background; and perhaps that is one reason why professional photos without a background so often seem to miss the very point of photography.

Tolstoy's characters achieve wisdom when they learn not to seek the great and poetic but to appreciate the small and prosaic. In *War and Peace*, Pierre spends his life looking for a grand meaning behind the daily flux of events. He oscillates between a belief in utopian systems that will explain everything and despair at the impossibility of arriving

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at such a system—between "semiotic totalitarianism" and "village relativism." He eventually learns that meaning is not deep and distant but here and everywhere. "In everything near and comprehensible he had [previously] seen only what was limited, petty, commonplace, and meaningless. He had equipped himself with a mental telescope and gazed into the distance where the petty and commonplace had seemed to him great and infinite only because they were not clearly visible."

Masonry, metaphysics, philanthropy, and philosophies of history all served as mental telescopes for Pierre, and he continually shifted between elation over his newest system for discovering the meaning of life and despair as each system betrayed a fatal flaw. But wisdom does eventually come to Pierre: "Now, however, he had learned to see the great, the eternal, the infinite in everything, and therefore . . . he had naturally discarded the telescope through which he had till then been gazing over the heads of men, and joyfully surveyed the ever-changing, eternally great, unfathomable, and infinite life around him." The meaning Pierre has sought was not remote, but hidden in plain view. The light shineth in the darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth it not.

Modern orthodoxy understands the self and meaning in quite the opposite way. In the shadow of Freud, most Americans, from Ann Landers to the most esoteric literary critic, have tended to assume that selfhood, no less than history, is a riddle with a hidden solution: to know oneself is to know the hidden self deep within us. But what if there is no central, core self? What if selfhood, like all forms of order and unity, is not discovered but made? This position was espoused by a remarkable minority of psychological thinkers. They rejected the Freudian model, and with it notions of the self as essentially complete by age five, hidden by layers of repression that only the analyst can probe.

Two Russian thinkers, the literary scholar Mikhail Bakhtin and the psychologist Lev Vygotsky, extended prosaic and Tolstoyan premises. They explicity denied that the self is a system, however, complex. On the contrary, they argued, the self is something much looser, an aggregate of habits, contingent facts, and clusters of order that continually interact with one another and with the hundred million diverse facts of daily life. Whatever wholeness we achieve requires enormous work, which is the effort of life; and that work is never complete. A self is not a gift, is not inborn and then distorted through socialization and repression. On the contrary, children only acquire a self as they are socialized. And that self, which can never achieve unity or fixity, changes throughout our lifetime.

Tolstoy emphatically rejected the idea of the self as a complex system, an idea associated in his day with that great inspirer of Freud, Dostoyevsky. In particular, Tolstoy disliked Dostoyevsky's sense that

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people are driven by a deep inner conflict, leading either to salvation or catastrophe. Dostoyevsky believed that lives are decided at critical moments, and he therefore described the world as driven by sudden eruptions from the unconscious. By contrast, Tolstoy insisted that although we may imagine our lives are decided at important and intense moments of choice, in fact our choices are shaped by the whole climate of our minds, which themselves result from countless small decisions at ordinary moments.

Interestingly enough, Tolstoy chose to illustrate his thesis through an interpretation of *Crime and Punishment,* which he analyzes as if he had written it himself. The essay in which this analysis occurs—"Why Do Men Stupefy Themselves?"—might be taken as a central text of prosaics. Chapter 4 of that essay begins with an apparently minor point: that even an occasional cigarette or a glass of wine is harmful. People usually say that although drunkenness is harmful, surely "the trifling alterations of consciousness" produced by a cigarette or a glass of wine at dinner are not. Arguing in this way, Tolstoy replies, is like supposing "that it may harm a watch to be struck against a stone, but that a little dirt introduced into it cannot be harmful."

Tolstoy then retells the story of the painter Bryullov, who corrected a student's sketch. "Why, you only touched it a tiny bit," the student exclaimed, "but it is quite a different thing." Bryullov replied: "Art begins where the tiny bit begins." Tolstoy then draws his prosaic moral: "That saying is strikingly true not only of art, but of all of life. One may say that true life begins where the tiny bit begins—where what seem to us minute and infinitely small alterations take place. True life is not lived where great external changes take place—where people move about, clash, fight, and slay one another—it is lived only where these tiny, tiny, infinitesimally small changes occur."

Tolstoy then turns to *Crime and Punishment* and transforms it into a Tolstoyan novel. "Raskolnikov did not live his true life when he murdered the old woman or her sister," nor did he decide to commit murder at any single, "decisive" moment. That choice was made, and he lived his true life, neither when he entered the old woman's lodgings with a concealed ax, nor when he made plans for the perfect crime, nor when he worried about whether murder is morally permitted. No, it was made when he was just lying on his couch, thinking about the most everyday questions—whether he should take money from his mother or not, whether he should live in his present apartment, and other questions not at all related to the old woman. "The question was decided . . . when he was doing nothing and only his consciousness was active; and in that consciousness, tiny, tiny alterations were taking place. . . . Tiny, tiny alterations—but on them depend the most important and terrible consequences."

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Precisely because intentions are shaped continually, every moment of our lives has moral value. Because our actions reflect the whole climate of our minds, everything that contributes to that climate—which means all of our thoughts and actions, however "inconsequential"—is potentially of great importance. In Anthony Trollope's novel *Can You Forgive Her?* one heroine tells another to refrain from saying unkind things about her husband even to herself, lest she teach herself to think that way by habit. In fact, Anna Karenina does teach herself to think badly of her husband, and later of Vronsky, in just this way. Her life is ruined, and lives generally are saved or ruined by innumerable prosaic moments, which together shape the self and all its subsequent actions. If we are honest, we must be so moment by moment; there are no unimportant moments. Or as Bakhtin liked to say, "There is no alibi for being."

Tolstoy's most moral characters learn this truth. In *Father Sergius*, a novel written toward the end of Tolstoy's life, a proud man trains himself to attain sainthood by grand gestures and noticeable acts of self-sacrifice that imitate incidents in *The Lives of the Saints*. But his quest fails, because no matter what he does to humble his pride he is still proud of his very humility. When he at last meets a true saint, he discovers that she and everyone else is unaware of her exceptionality. She is a mother who supports her daughter and her daughter's neurasthenic husband and who reproaches herself for not going to church. She lives a life of daily kindnesses that are entirely undramatic, undiscerned, and inimitable. Sergius learns that one cannot become a saint by imitating a model, and that true holiness, which never fits a pattern, grows out of the particular situations of daily life. Saints are prosaic and never recognizable as saints. Sergius draws a characteristically Tolstoyan lesson: if one is canonized, then one cannot be a saint. One reason that Tolstoy was excommunicated is that the Christ in whom he believed was not divine, not a performer of miracles, and perhaps not even a great teacher, except by example: he was simply a prosaically good man.

Tolstoy never tired of teaching this lesson, which is the reason that the characters he truly admires are not the dramatic and interesting ones like Prince Andrei, Natasha Rostova, or Anna Karenina but the "mediocre" ones like Nikolai Rostov or Dolly Oblonskaya. They lead undramatic lives, which are rightly lived moment to moment and which unfold only as a background to the dramatic stories of the noticeable heroes. It could be no other way, because good lives don't make good stories, because nothing especially narratable happens in them. "All happy families resemble each other; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way," wrote Tolstoy, because happy families are too prosaic to make a story, but each unhappy one has a story of its own.

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Dolly Oblonskaya is Tolstoy's moral compass. Once she accepts her husband's genial and habitual infidelity, nothing happens in her life worth telling. We catch glimpses of her struggling with her children's all-too-familiar illnesses and mischief, talking with peasant women about women's daily cares, and even wondering whether romantic love might be more satisfying than her daily grind, but she nevertheless always does the right thing moment by moment. By contrast, her philandering husband Stiva, who would never deliberately harm anyone, stands as a symbol of prosaic evil, not because of any great sin or evil action but because he lives badly moment by moment. He has never trained himself to act responsibly and honestly in small ways.

Most literature and most Western thought has described evil as something grand, terrifying, and Satanic, but Russian literature teaches us that it is ordinary and banal. That great disciple of Tolstoy, Anton Chekhov, always attributes ruined lives to daily pettiness. As Elena Andreevna tells Uncle Vanya: "Ivan Petrovich, you are an educated, intelligent man, and I should think you would understand that the world is being destroyed not by crime and fire, but by . . . all these petty squabbles." Dostoyevsky verged on a prosaic understanding of evil when he described the devil who visits Ivan Karamazov as petty, commonplace, fashionably liberal, and politely skeptical. Hell, it turns out, is just like our world—it has adopted the metric system—and the devil himself is, remarkably enough, an agnostic. Dostoyevsky's point is that evil is not alien or mysterious but derives from our most common wishes and thoughts, because we all desire "to kill our fathers" and to harm others and ourselves.

Tolstoy takes this insight one step further to a truly prosaic view. Evil usually results from neither grand nor banal desires, but rather from something closer to criminal negligence. Evil happens not because we subconsciously wish it, but simply because we do not pay attention, because we omit to develop the habit of evaluating and correcting "the tiny alterations" of our thoughts moment to moment. A true semiotic totalitarian, Dostoyevsky thought that evil, like chaos, required a principle. Tolstoy knew that it is good that demands energy, like the moment-to-moment conscientiousness of a good mother.

Because they are suspicious of the grand gesture, prosaic thinkers tend to be debunkers. They are especially hostile to the ideology of romantic love, which regards ordinary marriage as uninteresting and great passion as real life. That classic of twentieth-century criticism, Denis de Rougement's *Love in the Western World,* contends that Eros and romantic passion render impossible the truest and most important kind of love, family love. One cannot marry Iseult (Mrs. Tristan?), nor can one imagine Romeo and Juliet routinely sitting down to breakfast.

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Romantic love comes complete with an ideology of transcendence and desire, and a utopian contempt for prosaic marriage, which it finds hopelessly boring and middle-class. But in fact "to love in the sense of passion-love is the contrary of to live," de Rougement insists. "It is an impoverishment of one's being . . . an inability to enjoy the present without imagining it as absent." Marriage cannot be based on passion, because marital love and romantic love are as contradictory as prose and poetry.

De Rougement's book reads like a gloss on the great prosaic novelists, from Jane Austen to Anthony Trollope to Tolstoy. One might say that Anna Karenina dies from a lack of prosaics, from her attempt to base her life with Vronsky entirely on passion and the excitement of desire. She refuses even to direct the household servants, who are compelled to receive their orders from Vronsky; and she pays almost no attention to her daughter. Tolstoy contrasts Anna's rejection of the everyday world with Dolly's conversation with the peasant women and Kitty's involvement with her mother and the servants in making jam.

Tolstoy's wife related her husband's account of how the central idea of *Anna* came to him:

> I was sitting downstairs in my study and observing a very beautiful silk line on the sleeve of my robe. I was thinking about how people get the idea in their head to invent all those patterns and ornaments of embroidery, and that there exists a whole world of woman's work, fashions, ideas by which women live. . . . Anna is deprived of all these joys of occupying herself with the woman's side of life, because she is alone. All women have turned away from her, and she has nobody to talk to about all that which composes the everyday, purely feminine occupations.

For Tolstoy, those are really the only important occupations, and so he invariably described the usual world of men—Karenin's politics, Vronsky's military life, Koznyshev's sterile philosophizing, everything but working the land—as essentially meaningless by comparison. In all of these masculine occupations, he detected a contempt for the prosaic, and therefore falsity. At the end of *Emma,* Jane Austen makes much the same point when she has Knightley distinguish between the male world of "the great" and the prosaic stories describable only in "woman's language." Given that distinction, everything or almost everything important belongs to woman's realm, including novels like *Emma.* Above all, anything that has positive moral value is to be found there.

For Tolstoy, Bakhtin, and most prosaic thinkers, a special conception of ethics was of supreme importance. For it is above all in the realm of ethics that the systematic view of the world is misleading and dangerous. Systematic ethics conceives of right and wrong as conformity or noncon-

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formity to the moral norms discovered by ethical philosophers. The only alternative to such a view, it has often been stated, is one or another form of subjectivism, emotivism, or relativism, all of which ultimately make any true moral judgments impossible. Here again, one is offered a choice between semiotic totalitarianism and village relativism, both of which assume that without a system there is nothing. Tolstoy and Bakhtin believed that there is an alternative to these equally unacceptable positions.

If morality were a matter of rules, they reasoned, then the only work involved in making moral decisions would be in deciding which rules apply to a given situation. Moral agents, in such a view, come to resemble Tolstoy's Ivan Ilych, whose brilliance as a jurist arises precisely from his adeptness at eliminating "all considerations irrelevant to the legal aspects of the case, and reducing even the most complicated case to a form in which it could be presented on paper only in its externals, excluding his personal opinion of the matter, while above all observing every prescribed formality." Ivan Ilych is never led astray by irrelevant sympathies or particularities and judges every matter entirely according to abstract norms. Tolstoy directs his irony at a method that eliminates everything truly important in deciding moral questions. As Bakhtin puts it, one loses the very "oughtness" of moral decisions when they become entirely mechanical and are separated from the concerns of real people. In a novel, such a view could only be the object of parody; and it is novels, not philosophical or legal treaties, that are correct.

If moral decisions were a matter of applying rules, then a computer could be the most moral of agents. But this is monstrous. "If human life could be [completely] governed by reason," Tolstoy wrote, "then the possibility of life would be destroyed." And yet, if morals are not a matter of rules then what can be said about how moral decisions are made?

Both Levin in *Anna Karenina* and Pierre in *War and Peace* learn after fruitless attempts to identify a guiding system that, in fact, they do not need one. When Pierre rightly lives moment to moment, when the tiny alterations of his thoughts take place in the correct way, he achieves a sensitivity to each situation that tells him what to do. He acts rightly, even though his actions conform to no rule. He becomes a good moral agent as Nikolai Rostov becomes a good soldier and Dolly a good mother—by learning and practicing what Tolstoy calls "moral alertness."

Such a view carries with it an emphasis on the process of education and on daily experience. If moral decisions were made by rules, they could become automatic. But in Tolstoy's view, moral decisions are necessarily matters of work in each case. There is no substitute for moral

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responsiveness to unique people in particular situations at a given moment of their lives, for it is in just such a complex nexus that morality lives: there is no alibi for being.

Tolstoy and Bakhtin do not mean to reject rules entirely. On the contrary, rules, principles, and maxims have their pedagogic function. When one learns where rules work and, still more, where they fail, one's sense of moral complexity is enriched. Such enrichment is essential to moral education and is in principle endless. A moral resting point is never earned once and for all.

Such a view of morals suggests the importance of novels, and the connection between prosaics as a view of life and prosaics as a view of literature focused on novels. For where are we to look for descriptions of situations rich enough to educate our moral sense? Surely we cannot look in philosophical texts, because even when philosophers talk in general terms about the irreducible importance of particulars, these observations are themselves too general to be of much use. We want life, and philosophers give us "being"; "praxis" is nothing but a philosopher's notion of practice. In philosophers' examples or thought experiments, one lacks a rich sense of the psychological and social milieu of living people. Sociologists' case studies are no richer. And even in daily life, we do not see much of other people's thought processes or know much of their experience before our seeing them. But the entire impulse of novels is to provide just such information, as "thickly" as possible. Ethics is a matter of prosaics, and great prose develops our ethical sense.

For such reasons, Bakhtin came to regard the novel as the highest art form—indeed, as the height of Western thought, more profound than abstract philosophy. In great novels, the texture of daily life is described with a richness, depth, and attention to contingent particulars that no other form of thought or literary genre offers. In novels we see moral decisions made moment by moment by inexhaustibly complex characters in unrepeatable social situations at particular historical times; and we see that the value of these decisions cannot be abstracted from these specifics.

Thus, for reasons both literary and ethical, Bakhtin became the champion of the novel and the opponent of all traditional "poetics." For, from Aristotle to the present, "poetics" has always identified the essence of literature with poetry, which is why poetics has become a synonym for "theory of literature." Poetics recognizes in prose only those aspects it shares with poetry, and denies artistic significance to the rest. For Bakhtin, however, the greatness of prose art lies precisely in what it does *not* share with poetry—in its sense of the prosaic texture of life in all its richness and ordinariness. Consequently, to appreciate novels we need not poetics, but prosaics, a theory recognizing that novels provide a

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special way of thinking about the world before our eyes and about the ethical problems we constantly face.

This approach to novels is quite different from the one often taken in ethics classes. There students are encouraged to take the fiction as the instantiation of a norm, or as an example from which to derive a norm. A good student learns to think away all those "irrelevancies" that conceal the "essential problem." But from the point of view of prosaics, the value of novels derives from these very "irrelevancies," from what Bakhtin calls "the surplus of humanness," which cannot be transformed into norms. Where traditional philosophy ends, prosaic ethics begins.

The prosaic approach to novels is also quite different from the method used in most literature classes today. Remarkably enough, moral approaches to literature have been essentially taboo in major American universities for the past half century. At most, one can talk of moral themes, but ethical criticism per se has long been a relic. The New Criticism, which reigned so long in American academies, tended to deny literature any propositional or practical value and was, consequently, hostile to ethical criticism. Its successors have brought back the reader as interpreter, as evaluator, and as political actor, but not as moral agent. The very idea that there could be moral questions not subsumed by political ones is itself regarded as hopelessly reactionary. Moral questions can only be brought in through the back door—as questions of literary technique or as support for a political pronouncement. With only rare exceptions, critics avoid real ethical engagement with the text.

And this is very odd indeed. After all, one reason that people read literature is to understand other people and their moral decisions. Scholars today look down on such prosaic and vulgar interests and teach their students to be more "sophisticated." But what if scholars are the ones who have lost touch, and it is students who see the matter correctly? Who should be teaching whom?

Given such questions, we might consider Bakhtin's ideas and reconsider Tolstoy's thoughts about the ethics of reading. I realize that in recommending *What Is Art?* and similar writings of Tolstoy, I risk seeming naive, because all that most people remember about these essays is their narrow moralism—the very thing that has always given moral criticism a bad name. In reacting to such narrowness, we have mistakenly banned moral criticism altogether. But, for all of Tolstoy's objectionable moralism, he also offers an approach to the ethics of reading that is both responsible and deeply prosaic.

He tells us that the explicit moral one may draw from a work is not what is most important about it, even from a moral point of view. What is important is how the work "infects" us with moral values that we as readers practice moment to moment while reading it. In one of his most

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interesting essays, Tolstoy argued that the overt moral of Chekhov's story "The Darling"—the moral the author intended and his readers discovered—is a bad one but that nevertheless the story is a good one, because of what it does with us as we read it. We extend sympathy unawares to a character we ostensibly condemn. The effect contradicts the message. Like Balaam, Chekhov blesses where he means to curse.

One might make the inverse point about television programs that ostensibly preach an uplifting moral—say, the evils of sexual abuse of children—but that make such abuse interesting and titillating in the process. What really matters most in reading fiction, and in every other experience, are the tiny, tiny alterations of consciousness in process.

Perhaps the real education that literature provides lies in the moment-to-moment decisions we make in the course of reading: where to extend sympathy and where to desire a just punishment; when to be carried away and when to remain skeptical; whether or not (to use a phrase that has gone out of fashion) to "identify" with a character. Whatever conclusions we may explicitly draw, we have *practiced* reactions to particular kinds of people and situations, and practice produces habits that may precede, preclude, or preform conscious moral judgments in daily life.

Of course, it is easier to remember the conclusion, summary, or interpretation of a work than the whole process of reading it. But if prosaics is right, then the process itself affects us at least as much, for good or ill. When Tolstoy wrote that the only way he could tell what *Anna Karenina* was about would be to rewrite it, he was, I think, stressing not the intricacy of his text as purely formal artifact, but rather the complexity of reading as a series of small decisions and moment-to-moment judgments. This process is not just indispensable to the point of the book, it *is* the point of the book. Like true life, art begins where the tiny bit begins.

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The Japanese-American Internment

A Reappraisal

ERIC J. SUNDQUIST

THE RECENT SUPREME COURT DECISION in the case of *United States* v. *Hohri*, a 1983 class-action suit that could bring over $4 billion in reparations to some sixty thousand survivors of the Japanese-American internment during World War II, has left the question of justice in limbo. By unanimously ruling that the case should have been heard in the U. S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit (not in the Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, as it was in 1986), the justices seized upon a technicality that allowed them, at least for the moment, to sidestep the thorny problem of reparations and to remain silent on the government's conduct in the internment program itself. At issue in the suit is the Justice Department's argument that claims paid in the post-war period fulfilled its obligation. This view is contested by the plaintiffs' argument that critical new evidence of governmental misconduct brought to light only in 1983 obviates the statute of limitations that would bar further civil action. The case has now been rendered moot by legislation passed by the House in 1987 and by the Senate this past spring, and now signed into law by President Reagan. At stake is the determination of the question of guilt over the United States internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

The reparations bill, which passed the House last year, would grant a one-time payment of $20,000 to each of the surviving internees in compensation for losses sustained when they were forced to give up their homes and jobs for internment in grim desert camps. Those who were unable to resettle in other parts of the country or to join the military were imprisoned for four years and reduced to an austere existence

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lightened only by their considerable resilience and spiritual fortitude. Children attended makeshift schools and adults worked, sometimes at their appropriate professional trades but more often at routine jobs, all paying between twelve and nineteen dollars per month. Their pay fell just below the prevailing GI scale at the outset of the war and was sometimes less than Axis POWs in the United States were able to make. Those internees who sold their belongings in panic sales before internment often received but a fraction of their value; and much of their stored or locked property was vandalized and looted during the internment itself. The state of California, operating under the cover of alien land laws, also seized scores of farms in escheat actions. Because of mismanagement and fraud on the part of the Federal Reserve, the Farm Security Administration, and individuals entrusted with remaining Japanese-American property, internees who sought to recover their losses under the Evacuation Claims Act of 1948 were paid at an average of ten cents on the dollar in a process not concluded until 1965.

The simple facts of the economic hardship suffered by Japanese Americans have rarely been disputed. It is the moral and legal dimensions of the internment that remain stubbornly complex. Although their treatment and consequent losses bear no comparison with those of Afro-American slaves or American Indians in the nineteenth century, for example, the internment of Japanese Americans is distinguished as a contemporary act directed exclusively at a defined racial group, the majority of them United States citizens. At the same time, retrospective condemnation of American violations of civil rights has become something of a passion among historians, and careful distinctions must be drawn between the internment in the United States and the conduct of the fascist governments during the same years. Radical revisionist arguments notwithstanding, there is no serious resemblance between the experience of Japanese Americans and European Jews. Even if wartime extremists among the public or in legislatures could advocate, as in one random suggestion, that interned Japanese Americans should be sterilized, the camps contained no facilities for torture or extermination. Nor did the camps authorize experiments in vivisection, such as those carried out on American POWs in Japan.

If race remains the central issue in any evaluation of the internment, it must therefore be understood in a broad historical context. Federal and state laws had for decades insured that Japanese were variously excluded from the United States when possible, denied citizenship once they arrived, and restricted in their ownership of property. Viewed as disloyal and devious, Japanese were isolated from the mainstream of American economic, social, and political life in a circular logic of discrimination and suspicion. Unlike the anti-German sentiment that led

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to the internment of aliens and discriminatory practices against citizens of German ancestry during World War I, the treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II was to a great degree rooted in the belief that Asians were incapable of being assimilated. (That our somewhat romantic alliance with China during the war made Chinese Americans suddenly acceptable did little, in reality, to conceal the continuing prejudice against them.) Alongside these barriers to assimilation, however, one must measure as motives for the internment the powerful wartime hatred released by Japan's alliance with the European fascist powers and what was thought to be Japan's military and diplomatic duplicity, stunningly summed up in the attack on Pearl Harbor. In the end, the powerful complementary factors of American anti-Asian sentiment and Japan's own aggression throughout the Pacific merged to create a single way of thinking about Japanese Americans that now seems to have been both mistaken and unavoidable.

Two recent studies—Peter Irons's *Justice at War: The Story of the Japanese American Internment Cases* (1983) and Richard Drinnon's *Keeper of Concentration Camps: Dillon S. Myer and American Racism* (1987)—uniformly condemn the internment from very different perspectives. Their works join a long line of important studies by Dorothy Thomas, Jacobus tenBroek, Morton Grodzins, Roger Daniels, William Petersen, Bill Hosokawa, Michi Weglyn, and others that together have made an exhaustive political, social, and moral case against the internment program. But the studies indicate as well that the current generation of scholarship, reflecting the more militant mood of third-generation Japanese Americans and post–New Left historiography, may face a narrowed choice of strategies—to document the legal case for reparations or to call up the specter of American "racism" in ever more damning forms. While Richard Drinnon's book can only be judged in light of the great range of issues comprising wartime psychology, Irons's argument goes to the heart of the problem. Irons examines in detail the battle for jurisdiction between the Justice and War Departments over the question of internment and the four internment cases that did ultimately come before the Supreme Court in 1943 and 1944.

The convictions of Gordon Hirabayashi and Minoru Yasui for violating a curfew applicable only to persons of Japanese ancestry were unanimously upheld by the Court. Fred Korematsu's conviction for remaining in a prohibited coastal area was upheld by a six-to-three vote, despite Justice Frank Murphy's strongly dissenting opinion that the internment order fell into "the ugly abyss of racism." On the same day, the Court unanimously ruled that Congress had not authorized the continued detention of "loyal" citizens, such as Mitsuye Endo, but the Court declined to consider Endo's constitutional objections to the initial

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internment. Even though it is a distinction with an extraordinary difference, it is noteworthy that the *Korematsu* and *Hirabayashi* decisions were later cited at Nuremberg by Nazi defendants who claimed that the "evacuation" of the Jews posed a similar "military necessity."

These Supreme Court cases remain at the center of current reparation efforts. In 1975 President Ford issued a proclamation stating that the internment had been wrong. In 1980 Congress established the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians to hear testimony from officials, internees, and scholars. On the basis of evidence of Justice Department and War Department misconduct recorded in *Personal Justice Denied,* the Commission's official 1983 report, and analyzed in detail in *Justice at War* by Peter Irons (himself a member of the legal team fighting for reparations), the convictions of Korematsu and Hirabayashi have now been vacated in U.S. District Court. Irons also demonstrates that in the original verdicts powerful Supreme Court members stifled dissenting views as fully as possible. But given the composition of the Roosevelt Court and the dynamics of racial antipathy at work in the midst of the war, it is an open question whether the internment cases would have had a different outcome even without internal pressure or the doctoring of key evidence. What, then, were the motives underlying such a miscarriage of justice?

On the authority of President Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066, signed on February 19, 1942, and Public Law 503, passed by Congress soon thereafter, some 120,000 Japanese Americans were placed in what Roosevelt without hesitation referred to as "concentration camps." Close to 70,000 of the internees were United States citizens by birth ("Nisei," or second generation; their first-generation parents are known as "Issei"). A program of voluntary relocation failed when many of the few thousand who left the West Coast were turned back by officials and residents of other states determined to "keep the Japs out." Tentatively advanced by General John DeWitt, chief of the Western Defense Command, and California governor Culbert Olson, another plan to move Japanese Americans only to the interior valleys of California (to take them out of sensitive coastal areas yet maintain their important agricultural manpower) also foundered on objections from local politicians and the War Department. Once jurisdiction over the relocation had passed from the Justice Department to the War Department, a series of military orders gradually encompassing more and more territory and people placed internees under the supervision of the War Relocation Authority. It created ten spartan "Relocation Centers" in California, Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, Arizona, Colorado, and Arkansas during the spring and summer of 1942. Some two thousand Japanese Americans marked as especially dangerous, most of them aliens, had been seized immediately

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after Pearl Harbor. They were imprisoned in four Justice Department "Internment Camps" in Texas, New Mexico, Montana, and North Dakota.

Despite the relative swiftness and efficiency of the internment, Japanese Americans were not as easily singled out by race as an "enemy" group as some historians have suggested. Nor were the Japanese across the Pacific always taken to be unique enemies. In war propaganda and in public opinion, all of the Axis powers, as well as their ethnic representatives in the United States, were vilified and caricatured. The strong evidence that the United States would have used atomic weapons against Germany, had it been necessary, refutes the assertion that the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had primarily a racial motivation. In fact, the public at the outset of the war (even on the West Coast, surprisingly enough) considered Germany a far greater threat to the United States than Japan. Reacting in part to anti-German feeling carried over from World War I, to German submarine attacks in the Atlantic, and to the undeniable evil of Nazi Germany, President Roosevelt was willing to intern hundreds of thousands of German Americans throughout the nation. Attorney General Francis Biddle was more temperate, however, and in the end about half of the twelve thousand German and Italian aliens initially arrested remained interned. If greater suspicions of Germany and German-American groups were clearly justified by military reality, however, the attack on Pearl Harbor and the series of decisive Japanese victories in the Pacific in early 1942 contributed greatly to public and official willingness to separate the Japanese in America for confinement.

It may therefore not be wrong to accept Geoffrey Perrett's view that the hostility against Japanese Americans had elements of a "ritual sacrifice." In this view, several years of war anxiety intersected with initial humiliations on the battlefield to create a national psychic crisis. Because of their visible racial differences from Anglo-Americans and the history of discrimination that had isolated them socially and economically, Japanese Americans were an easily identifiable group of victims. German and Italian Americans were far more numerous and fully assimilated; they also had persuasive political spokesmen and allies. Paradoxically, one might say, the weakness of Japanese Americans, rather than their obvious danger, contributed to the decision for internment. On the West Coast, more sweeping but equitable proposals to deal with all suspect aliens, including Italians and Germans, gave way to the exclusion of Japanese Americans—defined as anyone having as little as one-sixteenth Japanese ancestry—from California and portions of Washington, Oregon, and Arizona. Although no acts of Japanese-American sabotage were ever proven, the doctrine of "military necessity" es-

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poused by DeWitt and the War Department remained the prevailing justification for internment long after it had been adequately refuted. In early 1942, however, many agreed with the assessment of *Time* magazine that "California is Japan's Sudetenland."

General DeWitt, who finalized the internment orders, has been cast as the villain by some historians. Consider, for example, DeWitt's 1943 remark before the House Naval Affairs Committee that the Japanese, unlike the German or the Italian, will be under suspicion "until he is wiped off the map." Morton Grodzins thought this remark followed "the essential racial doctrine of the Third Reich." But it is more accurate to say that DeWitt was a less-than-competent commander. Described by his then subordinate, General Joseph Stilwell, as a "jackass" in charge of an "amateur" staff, DeWitt was given to radically indecisive judgments. He was swayed by local political pressure, by the interference of War Department officials, and by his understandable fear of being made a scapegoat in case of enemy or fifth-column attack. The smear of the reputations of Admiral Husband Kimmel and General Walter Short in the wake of Pearl Harbor was certainly before him, as were the Japanese submarine attacks on West Coast shipping in the weeks after Pearl Harbor. Even so, DeWitt was at first skeptical of the need for, and the practicality of, mass evacuation. He favored instead the removal of Axis aliens and perhaps some Japanese-American citizens from key defense locations in urban coastal areas. Only at the urging of California attorney general (and aspiring gubernatorial candidate) Earl Warren, and especially of Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy and his staff, did DeWitt move decisively toward the claim of "military necessity" to justify mass removal to inland camps. The burden of his view, spelled out in his official report, was racial: "The Japanese race is an enemy race and while many second and third generation Japanese born on United States soil, possessed of United States citizenship, have become 'Americanized,' the racial strains are undiluted."

Nevertheless, the internment cannot be construed as the triumph of pure racism. The initial arrest of the suspect list of Japanese-American aliens was justified on the basis of strategic maneuvers and suspicions that reached a high pitch in the 1930s. The mass internment of the remaining 118,000 aliens and citizens was grounded in long-standing racial ideas that preceded military preparations and overt acts of war. Tracing back the strands of argument that ended in the internment leads less often to clarity than to confusion over ungrounded fears and potential dangers. In 1915, for instance, the sensationalistic Hearst newspapers, a primary organ of anti-Asian sentiment, reprinted a supposed translation of a Japanese book entitled *The War Between Japan and America.* In a variation on the purported alliance between Japan,

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Germany, and Mexico announced two years later in the notorious Zimmerman telegram, the largely fabricated Hearst translation predicted a Japanese invasion of the United States beginning with destruction of the Panama Canal. Although the story was essentially a hoax, it drew not only on the prevailing prejudices of the day, but also on strategic thought that was plausible enough given the relative military postures of Japan and the United States in the early twentieth century.

Images of white supremacy employed in propaganda during the Pacific war capitalized on old fears of an "invasion" of the United States by the "yellow peril," whether slowly by immigration and birth or suddenly by military attack. Until the twentieth century, fears of Japanese immigrants had paled in comparison to antagonism toward the Chinese. Japan's emergence as a military power, combined with a notable increase in immigration, however, rapidly changed American attitudes. Following Japan's striking victory in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, Japanese immigration to the United States was sometimes interpreted as part of a concerted Japanese plan of eastward "manifest destiny." Extremists even asserted that Japanese veterans were being sent over for eventual military muster within the United States. Immigration was slowed considerably by the Gentlemen's Agreement negotiated by Teddy Roosevelt in 1908. But the agreement also backfired in that its provision allowing for the immigration of family members brought a large influx of "picture brides"—women chosen by family arrangement for marriage to immigrant men already in America. The brief but dramatic increase in Japanese-American birthrates caused by the arranged marriages led to anti-immigrationist charges that Japanese "fecundity" constituted a new form of subversion. The high Japanese birthrate contributed to the post-World War I upsurge of nativism that culminated in the Immigration Act of 1924, which blocked further Japanese immigration entirely.

Population hysteria sometimes shaded off into sexual hysteria. Anti-miscegenation diatribes and laws were applied to Asians as well as to blacks during these years. Taking a page from Jim Crow southerners, a California politician in 1909 feared for white girls "sitting side by side in the school rooms with matured Japs, with their base minds, their lascivious thoughts, multiplied by their race and strengthened by their mode of life." Thirty years later, Mississippi congressman John Rankin urged sexual segregation in the internment camps to prevent a rapid multiplication of the Japanese-American population. Rankin also argued that the mixing of white, Negro, and Japanese blood plasma for the armed forces would "mongrelize" the nation and claimed, only somewhat less wildly, that a potential alliance between American blacks and Japanese tied the Pacific war to the domestic "race war."

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Rankin's radical thinking was the exception in official and public views of the "Japanese problem." Yet it indicates the degree to which a diplomatic or military foe, in part by reason of race, could become an internal enemy. The barriers erected in the 1924 Immigration Act stood as much against a pervasive "rising tide of color" (in Lothrop Stoddard's phrase) and European immigrants considered to be politically subversive as against the "yellow peril." On the other hand, while the federal limitation of naturalized citizenship to "free white persons" had been amended to include blacks after the Civil War, Asian immigrants remained "aliens ineligible for citizenship." This policy was reaffirmed by the Supreme Court ruling in *Ozawa* v. *United States* in 1922 and not reversed until the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952. In addition, the state of California, driven by the pressure of such groups as the Native Sons of the Golden West, the California Joint Immigration Committee, and the Western Growers Association, adopted a series of prohibitive alien land laws aimed at both immigrants and their citizen children. Like the Chinese, the Japanese were charged not just with ingenuity and industriousness but also with unfair price and labor competition. Immigration policy and the phenomenon of arranged marriages created an unusual demographic age gap between the Issei and the Nisei; more important, the restriction of citizenship to those born in the United States created a psychological gap that was exaggerated as the Nisei began to come of age in the years before and during World War II—the years in which they were more than ever determined to be recognized as true Americans.

Although conditioned by patterns of nativist thought and action, the decision for internment must be judged as well against the climate of race antagonism between Japan and the United States, and against the frequent Pacific war scares of the preceding several decades. Japan's imperial ambitions in Asia, which included the bombing of China that spilled over onto American missions and the bloody "rape of Nanking" in 1937, made Japan seem as fierce and determined an aggressor as Germany on the eve of the war. As John Dower has argued in *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (1986), colonial conquest paradoxically tied to racial purity underlay the claims of pan-Asian unification against the "white" world that culminated in Japan's declaration of war against the Allies. Cultivating the militarized ideal of the divine Yamato race, Japan hid vast, if implausible, designs of territorial subjugation behind the racial rhetoric of the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere." Japan's own expansionism ever since the annexation of Korea in 1910 and the 1931 invasion of Manchuria belied her claim that she was conducting a war to free Asia from white colonial rule. Nonetheless, its potential and its early results were frightening to the Allies.

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Dower has demonstrated that the Pacific war was everywhere infused with racial propaganda that exceeded the normal creation of demonic images of the enemy. The war across the sea and the war of words and images at home were intimately entangled. On the one hand was the Japanese portrait of the United States and the Allies as debauched ogres, feasting on colonial holdings in the "colored" world. On the other side was the American propensity to depict the Japanese as simian creatures or vermin that could not be defeated but only obliterated, a caricature that had undeniable effects on attitudes toward Japanese Americans at home. Hollywood made its contributions to the war effort—for example, Frank Capra's brilliantly manipulative work of racial propaganda, *Know Your Enemy*—and the media featured "Jap" cartoons, super-patriotic battle stories, and apocalyptic predictions of Japanese plans for conquest of America, such as Homer Lea's *The Valor of Ignorance* (first published in 1909 but reprinted in 1942). Also appearing around this time were anthropological studies of the rigidly disciplined character of the Japanese people. All of these efforts served to reinforce stereotypes of ferocious Japanese militarism that had an element of truth in the Far East and on the battlefield but were misplaced in the case of Americans of Japanese ancestry. Documented Japanese atrocities, refusals to surrender on the field and in Tokyo, the adoption of kamikaze ("divine wind") attacks, and intelligence intercepts revealing that suicide squads would form a primary defense in the case of invasion of the homeland likewise served to justify the air campaign of annihilation by fire and nuclear weapons. By the end of the war, the enemy had in some ways ceased to seem human at all. Polls in the summer of 1945 indicated that up to 15 percent of Americans wished to "exterminate" the Japanese.

Dower implies that the prospect of incendiary annihilation of the highly flammable Japanese cities dated from a plan advanced just before the war by Chief of Staff George Marshall. In fact, such a threat had been proposed by airman Billy Mitchell as early as 1921, at the very outset of strategic thought about air power. Preliminary plans for firebombing took their place in the array of strategic naval and air theories advanced, on both sides of the Pacific, after the turn of the century. Yet despite available intelligence on Japanese military thought, the United States foolishly underestimated Japanese capabilities on the eve of the war.

Quite apart from futuristic predictions of a Japanese military threat, such as H. G. Wells's 1908 novel *War in the Air*, there existed serious works of strategy, such as the 1933 book by the naval author Shinsaku Hirata, *When We Fight*, which offered a prescient scenario for surprise attack on Pearl Harbor and was known to American naval intelligence officers. In the United States several studies, more plausible than Homer

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Lea's or the popular fiction that exploited the theme of the "yellow peril," warned of Japanese military effectiveness. Hector Bywater's 1921 *Sea-Power in the Pacific*, expanded as a novel entitled *The Great Pacific War* in 1925 (reprinted in 1942 as well), outlined a fictional Japanese surprise naval and air attack on Pearl Harbor and the Philippines, followed by eventual United States recovery and victory. As John Toland noted some years ago, the future enemy strategist Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, at the time a naval attaché in Washington, no doubt knew of Bywater's much-debated book. In another instance, W. Jefferson Davis's *Japan, Air Menace of the Pacific* (1927) had forecast air strikes on the Philippines, possibly Hawaii, and, most important, the Panama Canal as a prelude to war. If the Hearst newspaper version of the Japanese military threat—the Zimmerman thesis—was fabricated, it was thus not without some basis in plausible strategic thinking about Japan's capacity to achieve a North American or Latin American assault.

Davis to some extent blamed American immigration policy and punitive alien land laws for the climate of increasing tension. (Interestingly enough, the Japanese text that had been the basis for the Hearst translation was also written in part to protest anti-Japanese measures in California.) During the war the Japanese exploited such a policy, as they did the existence of the internment camps, for propaganda purposes, although there is no evidence that it was anything like a central factor leading to war in the Pacific. Japan's powerful military and her devotion to authoritarian martial codes, her imperial worship, and a seemingly paradoxical combination of feudalism and modernization created what Saburo Ienaga has called a "military gestalt" that spread into Japanese political and social thought. From the point of view of the United States, such a gestalt was rightly considered totalitarian; but translation of those perceptions into judgments of Japanese-American character was dangerous indeed. The most fantastic elements of Japanese militarism and imperialism were not known abroad (or, often, by the Japanese people). The United States in its response relied in more or less equal parts on Japanese rhetoric, intelligence data, and a storehouse of anti-Asian thought. A vicious cycle of ethnocentric reasoning, dating from the beginning of the century, thus fed Japanese bellicosity and America's exclusionary fears, setting the stage for a "war without mercy" and the internment of American citizens.

Japan's extraordinary victories in the early weeks of the war were a great shock to the American public, and only somewhat less so to Roosevelt and his Washington lieutenants. They had been playing for time and put an unjustified faith in a new strategy of deterence that was predicated upon Philippines-based air power—a strategy immediately rendered useless by the destruction of the B-17 squadrons under

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General Douglas MacArthur's command. Because the War Department wanted to protect the existence of intelligence gleaned by "Magic" (the operation that read enciphered Japanese diplomatic signal traffic, alongside the military signals read by "Ultra"), and because critical intelligence had been denied Kimmel and Short on the eve of the Pearl Harbor attack, early Japanese military prowess in the Pacific and Southeast Asia created an illusory threat to American soil itself.

Investigations by Secretary of the Navy Henry Knox and by the Roberts Commission unjustly laid the debacle of Pearl Harbor at the feet of the Hawaiian commanders. The investigations also credited fifth-column activity by resident Japanese with subverting military readiness. On the mainland, rumors of sabotage and pending attack, made partially credible by one ineffective submarine shelling of oil tanks near Santa Barbara in February and by the false-alarm aerial "battle" over Los Angeles that same month, led to racist assaults on Japanese Americans. The incidents also led to resurgence of bizarre charges, such as that Japanese-American farmers had planted tomatoes in the configuration of a large arrow pointing to an air base. Much was made of the fact that many Japanese Americans lived near railroads, canals, industrial sites, and military installations without mention of the economic or social discrimination that forced them into such choices. Unsubstantiated charges of clandestine shore-to-ship signaling were rampant, and many state civil service employees were dismissed from their jobs. Attorney General Earl Warren testified at the congressional Tolan Committee hearings in San Francisco that "because we have had no sabotage and no fifth column activities in this State," therefore "the sabotage we are to get" has been carefully concealed and precisely timed, as at Pearl Harbor and as in occupied Europe. Warren's circular logic, later repeated by DeWitt, was borrowed from none other than the respected liberal journalist Walter Lippmann. In a series of influential February columns, Lippmann underscored fears that "the Pacific Coast is in imminent danger of a combined attack from within and without."

What, in fact, was the real danger? In the midst of the early 1942 struggle between the Justice Department and the War Department over who should decide the issue of internment, both General Mark Clark, representing Chief of Staff George Marshall, and Chief of Naval Operations Harold Stark told a Senate hearing that the West Coast was well defended and that no Japanese invasion was possible. Yet the issue was not completely beyond doubt. Japanese submarine activity off the West Coast had become intermittent by the spring of 1942, but future resumption of attacks was unpredictable. In the months preceding the Battle of Midway, some cryptoanalysts thought that intercepts signaled an attack on California, not Midway; and in June of 1942, Admiral Chester Nimitz

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had five battleships in San Francisco harbor to defend it against attack. As it happened, the decisive victory at Midway that commenced June 3 ironically, just one day after General DeWitt signed the last in his series of constantly expanding evacuation orders—destroyed any faint possibility of Japanese invasion that remained. What is more, the Japanese occupation of the Aleutians during 1942–43, although initially it seemed a significant strategic threat, proved worthless. Ambassador to Japan Joseph Grew asserted in his popular *Report from Tokyo* (1942) that the Aleutians might prove a jumping off point for Japan "first to bomb important American centers and then, eventually, to invade America." But the Aleutian Islands remained, in the words Ronald Spector has applied to their reconquest, "a road which led nowhere." By the summer of 1942 the war was decidedly restricted to the distant Pacific, but the idea of internment had meanwhile gained irreversible momentum.

Even granting some grounds for fear of Japanese attack and fifth-column support during 1942, the question remained: Where would such support come from? Hawaii, with its substantial Japanese ethnic population (150,000, about one-third of the total population and most of them citizens), evacuated only a fraction of that group (about 1,500) for mainland internment. General Delos Emmons, although he doubted Japanese-American loyalty in case of an actual invasion, prevailed in his argument that he found no evidence of sabotage. And what was probably more important, Hawaii would have faced a terrible labor problem in the event of mass evacuation. Far less subject to attack than Hawaii, with a far smaller Japanese-American population, the mainland fell prey to hysterical thinking and political squabbles.

Yet "hysteria" may not be the correct word to describe a wartime program that had the support of groups as far to the left as the American Civil Liberties Union and the Communist party. (As pro-Soviet anti-fascists, of course, the Communists really had no choice. American Socialists earlier in the century had also supported the exclusion of Japanese immigrants along with other "backward races" and "alien scabs.") Justified and designed by the New Deal administration, the internment might best be considered the ultimate opportunity for federal social engineering. Be that as it may, the question of West Coast internment in some form had in effect already been decided by the intra-cabinet battle over jurisdiction that ended with Executive Order 9066. Attorney General Biddle and his staff in the Justice Department opposed internment, while the staff of the War Department—especially McCloy, who had made a name for himself as a counter-intelligence expert during the "Black Tom" German sabotage case of World War I—favored it. War won, Justice lost, as it were—but only because President Roosevelt wanted it that way.

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Faced in mid-1941 by deteriorating relations with Japan that pointed toward almost certain war, Roosevelt had authorized the preparation of a secret report on the loyalty of Japanese descendants in Hawaii and on the West Coast. It was written by Curtis Munson of the State Department in November of 1941. The report concluded that, while there were a few Japanese in the United States "who will tie dynamite around their waist and make a human bomb out of themselves," the vast majority were loyal to America. Most of all, those Nisei who belonged to the highly patriotic Japanese American Citizens League appeared "pathetically eager to show this loyalty." The only group that the Munson report considered at all dangerous was the Kibei, a relatively small group born in America but educated for the most part in Japan. As Roger Daniels has pointed out, the portion of the report that focused on the ease with which certain dams, railroads, and power stations could be destroyed by saboteurs was the part that caught Roosevelt's eye. Another fact may be relevant: in addition to the Munson Report and other reliable reports of Japanese-American loyalty, Roosevelt also had available to him, in a series of informal letters dating back to 1933, the opinions of Smithsonian curator Dr. Aleš Hrdlička. He advised the president, with Roosevelt's seeming encouragement, that Japanese perfidy and brutality had a specific racial basis measurable in such phenomena as skull size. Here, as elsewhere in the case of American blacks or Jewish refugees, Roosevelt's thinking was considerably less than progressive.

The Munson Report, publically suppressed until the Pearl Harbor hearings of 1946, was in accord with the firm denials by the FBI and by military and naval intelligence groups: the loyalty of those Japanese Americans not initially taken in by the Justice Department sweep did not pose a significant threat. Historians of the second phase of internment, while correct about its lack of justification, have tended nonetheless to ignore or play down the probable cause for the primary phase and paid little attention to the relevant intelligence record. Surveillance of Japanese immigrants and nationals on the part of the FBI, the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI), and the Army's G-2 dated from the early 1930s in the United States as well as in Latin America, where Japanese activity was pronounced. There was no doubt about *Japanese* espionage in the United States; what remained uncertain was the degree of *Japanese-American* involvement in it. Intelligence from "Magic" exposed the duplicity of Japanese diplomacy and pending military action in 1941. "Magic" also exposed claims by West Coast and Washington Japanese consular officials to have established successful surveillance of military facilities and to have recruited Nisei informants in aircraft plants and in the army. Naval intelligence reported significant Japanese, or Japanese-American, spying in Seattle and Portland; and extensive counter-intel-

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ligence operations carried out by the FBI and ONI in the San Francisco area revealed what Admiral Edwin Layton's recent study labels "extensive espionage." More dramatically, the Los Angeles arrest in the spring of 1941 of the Japanese spy Itaru Tachibana, in a counter-intelligence operation led by Kenneth Ringle of ONI, unearthed a load of sensitive defense intelligence data, including the names of purported alien and citizen agents.

Conversely, there is some indication that Japanese intelligence considered Nisei untrustworthy because they were too "American." The FBI recruited members of the pro-American Japanese American Citizens League (which barred Issei from membership) as informants about possible subversive activities, a practice that increased community tensions and eventually led to bitter recriminations during the internment. The two thousand interned in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, mostly Issei, were selected from a combined list of possibly dangerous Japanese Americans drawn up by the several intelligence agencies. A certain number of these, such as those belonging to the Society of the Amur River ("The Black Dragon Society"), were decided Japanese loyalists contributing to the war effort in China. Some on the list were leaders of Japanese social and cultural groups with only the vaguest political ties to Japan. It has been charged that the round-up of the target list of suspects was an attempt to eliminate any remnants of a nationalist "code of ethics" among Japanese Americans. If this was partially the case, the effort was not entirely unwarranted, given the certain threat of the Tripartite powers and the evidence of domestic espionage.

Because important FBI and ONI files about these operations remain closed even today, the exact character of any Japanese-American involvement in such activities remains unknown. Since J. Edgar Hoover and officials at ONI clearly disputed "the danger within," however, it is doubtful that the closed files contain data incriminating to more than a portion of those arrested in the initial Justice Department sweep. It is even less likely that loyalty among the remaining population, Issei and Nisei alike, could not have been determined by screening. Ironically, the Los Angeles counter-intelligence raid, if properly evaluated, might indirectly have aided the case of Japanese Americans. For, in addition to breaking an important spy network, Kenneth Ringle himself offered an assessment of the "Japanese Question" in an early 1942 ONI memorandum and in an anonymous essay in *Harper's* (written in May but not published until October). Both documents unequivocally state that only about 3 percent of Japanese Americans could be considered risks, that most of these were already locked up, and that remaining questions of loyalty could easily be determined on a case-by-case basis. As Peter Irons has shown, the attempts of Edward Ennis to include this material

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in the Justice Department brief in the *Hirabayashi* case were ignored, just as Ringle's perfectly sound reasoning had been ignored by War Department officials keen on mass internment.

The greatest instance of government misconduct in the Supreme Court cases lay elsewhere. In April of 1943, John McCloy received copies of the *Final Report, Japanese Evacuation From the West Coast, 1942*, written for General DeWitt under the direction of Colonel Karl Bendetsen, the War Department official perhaps most responsible for the initial recommendations in favor of evacuation. The *Final Report* bore the marks of DeWitt's vacillation on the issue of loyalty. He now claimed that a lack of sufficient time in which to determine Japanese-American loyalty had *not* been a problem in the spring of 1942. Rather, as a "tightly-knit racial group," the internees had all been deemed subject to suspicion. Recognizing that the racist cast of the report contradicted accounts of evacuation procedure already on record and would likely harm the government's case before the Supreme Court (where they were to argue that time simply did not allow adequate loyalty screening), McCloy ordered Bendetsen to rewrite the report, destroying the few released copies and doctoring the accompanying correspondence. In addition, the *Final Report* adopted as fact dubious assertions of fervent pro-Japanese nationalism and speculations about alien and citizen sabotage beyond the group already interned by the Justice Department. Borrowed directly from inflammatory evidence introduced in hearings of the House Un-American Activities Committee in the summer of 1941 (hearings muffled by Roosevelt's pressure because they threatened to ruin current diplomatic efforts) and later repeated by Earl Warren in his testimony before the Tolan Committee in February of 1942, the rumors of sabotage had little if anything to do with secret FBI or ONI data and were groundless. Between these two distortions of the truth, the *Final Report* emphatically supported the government's primary claim of "military necessity" before the Court. Having, in Kenneth Ringle's words, magnified the "Japanese" problem "out of its true proportion, largely because of the physical characteristics of the people," the government now hid the evidence.

The tenuousness of the Japanese consular claims of successful espionage may be judged from their inclusion of a report arguing that, because Japanese Americans could not easily penetrate the defense industry, black laborers and leaders were being recruited "to stall the program [that] the US plans for national defense" and to foment racial discontent. An alliance of this kind, had it existed in more than the imagination of Japanese officials, would have added an interesting dimension to Japan's assertions that the war was one of liberation from white imperialism for the colored peoples of Asia and the world.

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Although the Jim Crow army and bigotry in America momentarily brought a few blacks, including W. E. B. DuBois, around to this view, there was never the least substantive evidence that such a "colored" coalition would work. Instead it served primarily to excite the tempers of rabid segregationists like John Rankin.

An alliance against white imperialism would presumably also have appealed to those New Left historians who have depicted the internment as only one in a series of imperialist and racist outrages that have stained American history. Most recent among these historians is Richard Drinnon. His study of Dillon Myer's career as the head of the War Relocation Authority (WRA) and later the Bureau of Indian Affairs, entitled *Keeper of Concentration Camps*, takes the next logical step in the psycho-history of American war crimes but offers a cautionary tale about how to judge the internment program itself.

Keeper of Concentration Camps is painful to read precisely because the problem of racism, so central to the Pacific war and the internment rightly understood, is reduced by Drinnon to an intellectual epithet. The phrase "concentration camps" has of course been the subject of much debate. Shunned as too suggestive of the Holocaust by some scholars, by Dillon Myer, and more recently by the Commission on Wartime Relocation, the label has been accepted as technically the most accurate by many of the victims and historians of the internment. Still, the historian's temptation to invoke the Nazi death camps takes on particularly tendentious meaning in Drinnon's study. There he asserts that Dillon Myer embodied the "banality of evil" (what Hannah Arendt ascribed to Adolf Eichmann) and presided over a vast "archipelago" of prison camps (the American equivalent of Solzhenitsyn's Gulag).

The difficulty in correctly assessing the internment program lies partly in the fact that experiences within camps, both in opportunities for work, education, and culture and in harshness of treatment for violation of rules, varied widely. In addition to seasonal leave permitted primarily for agricultural work, the WRA in the fall of 1942 began a more liberal policy of permanent leave, which allowed selected "trustworthy" internees to attend college or to take regular jobs and settle outside of the restricted West Coast areas. The belated recognition that many Nisei were anxious to serve in the military led in 1942 to the recruitment of volunteers and a draft of eligible Nisei. With the exception of a few in intelligence work, those Japanese Americans already serving in the armed forces at the outset of the war had typically been discharged or downgraded to low-level jobs; but the new enlistments fortified linguistic and intelligence work in the Pacific and led to the formation of an all-Nisei combat team. Together with the similar "Jap Crow" 100th Infantry Battalion from Hawaii, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team

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fought with great valor in Italy, becoming the most decorated American troops of the entire war. Between resettlement and military service, then, nearly fifty thousand left the camps before the disbandment that began in late 1944, following months of deliberate delay until after Roosevelt's reelection.

Without question the most controversial and mismanaged phase of the internment was the WRA's institution of "loyalty" screening. It was designed to facilitate military induction and resettlement, and thus weed out "troublemakers" and draft resisters for separate confinement. The most pertinent questions in the loyalty questionnaire, so stupidly phrased that they had to be revised several times, in essence asked internees to declare willingness to serve in the armed forces and to foreswear any allegiance to Japan. Because Issei were not allowed to become citizens, many with good reason assumed that answering "yes" to the second question would leave them without a country. And because Nisei, as citizens, were already in the unnatural position in the camps of having been delegated more authority than their Issei parents, the loyalty screening and draft exacerbated generational conflict and wrenching emotional divisions. Out of family loyalty, then, or out of rage at being asked to serve in the military by a government that had first put them behind barbed wire, many Nisei also answered "no" to both questions. A new rift was thus created between those willing to serve in the military and those who resisted (the "no-no boys"). By 1946, some eight thousand internees, mostly Issei and their children, had been repatriated or expatriated to Japan. The large number who chose or were forced into exile, and a good deal of the turmoil that marked the camps, can be attributed to the bungled loyalty screening. As Dillon Myer and others since have pointed out, the screening could more effectively have been done *before* internment, when it obviously would have turned up many fewer "disloyal" Nisei or Issei.

Along with a variety of minor work strikes, there were several substantial "incidents," or riots growing out of factional strife or arbitrary punishments. Four internee deaths can be attributed to camp law enforcement—in one case, a trigger-happy guard shot a man who was simply wandering near the perimeter of a camp—or to military troops responding to what appeared to be riot situations. Serious conflict also broke out between pro-American internees, especially members of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), and others who attacked JACL members as government stooges or banded together to hold pro-Japanese rallies and "military" exercise periods. Besides Tule Lake in northern California, the relocation center where the supposedly disloyal were eventually concentrated, two more incarceratory WRA isolation units in Utah and Arizona at times employed lockups that

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bypassed the protections of due process. It is these episodes of violent conflict and the sometimes repressive rules and practices put in place to control them that lie at the heart of Drinnon's interpretation of the internment. His study contains much useful information about disciplinary aspects of the camps, as well as the complicity of the Japanese American Citizens League and the American Civil Liberties Union in the repressive treatment of troublesome internees, many of whom had legitimate grievances and demands.

In his own account of the internment, *Uprooted Americans*, Dillon Myer argued that "of the 70,000 people left in centers in 1944, probably at least half never had it so good." Even if he were right, that would leave a sizable number of people who never had it so bad. But such an opinion does not mark him as the homegrown fascist depicted by Drinnon. At worst a sometimes egocentric paternalist in his governance of the WRA, Myer on the whole made the best of a bad situation. He pushed hard for out-of-camp resettlement programs, admission of internees to college study, and opportunity for military service. He is rightly remembered by Michi Weglyn, herself a former internee, as a man who "did not shrink from speaking out for the just treatment of Japanese Americans" and who displayed uncommon pertinacity in putting up "with the scorn and venomous insults" hurled at him by racist journalists and politicians who claimed the WRA was *too soft* on internees. The riot and sporadic fighting at Tule Lake led Myer to be charged by the House Un-American Activities Committee and the western press, as one journalist put it , with "coddling and kidgloving these treacherous, fanatical, insolent monkey men." Unlike Weglyn, Drinnon finds Myer's vigorous responses to such racism (which occurred at just the time Japanese atrocities against American POWs were publicized and public opinion was highly inflamed) to be in reality a subterfuge enabling the WRA to add "a protective layer [of rhetoric] to their carapace of lies" and Myer to "pose as the fearless champion of his vilified wards." For Drinnon, it is but a short step from paternalism to governmental "terror."

"The 'good little boy' from a typical corn-belt farm had become a typical Washington bureaucrat," moving from a modest post as county agricultural agent—"the rural representative of the corporate state"—to a tyrannical position as the top "jailer" in the United States. So runs Drinnon's argument. Myer thus exemplifies, in Drinnon's pages, the Gestapo mentality of bourgeois capitalism, and his oversight of the resettlement program, which allowed nearly a third of the internees to live elsewhere, becomes a kind of parole and a deliberate scheme to destroy Japanese-American culture, slicing into "kin and generational groupings" and scattering "the severed members like leaves blown by prevailing westerlies." But resettlement was in fact not mandatory, and

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Myer's vision of the program was, in Drinnon's own words, "a matter of citizenship and absorption in the wartime manpower pool." As virtually all evidence shows, the Japanese Americans, especially the Nisei, were anxious to assimilate. One need not adopt the perverse attitude of S. I. Hayakawa that the internment was beneficial—because it forced Japanese Americans to seek new opportunities outside their closed coastal communities—in order to dispute Drinnon's charge that resettlement deliberately aimed to destroy ethnicity. The concept of "ethnicity" had then few of the connotations of separatist pride it carries today. While he certainly had enemies and took controversial steps to stop dissent in the Japanese-American community, Mike Masaoka, the vigorously pro-American leader of the JACL, therefore seemed a hero to most. What rights Japanese Americans received, from military service to naturalized citizenship in 1952, came not from the militants who may have had abstract justice on their side, but through the determined efforts of such assimilationists as Masaoka, a lesson clarified in his own recent autobiography, *They Call Me Moses Masaoka* (1987).

Drinnon notes that he once thought of discussing Dillon Myer as the mainland counterpart to Edward Lansdale, the father of counter-insurgency in Vietnam. The resemblance suggests more about Drinnon than about Myer. It suggests, in addition, the tendency of some revisionist historiography to magnify the sins of the past with the lens of contemporary moral preoccupations. American "racism," at home and abroad, has become the most obvious such preoccupation. But because racism is so serious an issue in United States history, and because the injustice done Japanese Americans during World War II must be ascribed in part to racist reaction, there is all the more reason to treat the subject carefully, with respect for truth and reasoned judgment.

"We were boat people in our own country," Donald Nakahata has recently said of his internment. From the distance of over forty years it is difficult to judge reliably the evidence or feel clearly the sentiments that led to the internment and to the creation of an alien enemy among overwhelmingly loyal American citizens. In his testimony before the Commission on Wartime Relocation, John McCloy, one of the internment's chief architects, inadvertently admitted that one motive was "retribution" for Pearl Harbor. Whether one should interpret this as the confession of an aged "war criminal," as some would suggest, or as a revelation that the truth of racial attitudes in wartime is psychologically complex, there can be little question that the internment, however sound its motivations must have seemed at the time, was wrong and that a debt is owed Japanese Americans. The repayment of that debt cannot be made with money alone; it must also include apologies based on a clear historical understanding.

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New York 1938

HELEN SIMONDET

The warm living room, tall ceilinged, white
With its abundance of effulgent light
Regarded us, while sitting in stiff chairs
We listened to Dvořák, unawares
Each of the web of thought the other spun
With cunning of the spider, one after one,
How intricate the filmy patterns grew
Leaving no tangible trace when we were through.

Mine, loneliness, even more acute
Here, with all these strangers, my heart mute
With longing for a friendly word; my name
Spoken with warmth, as before I came
From home, family and friends who knew me best,
These were my people, genteel and well dressed,
Charming, remote, here was the world of Art
Drawing us closer, yet, not heart to heart.

This was the melancholy web I spun,
When, that heavenly music, like the sun
Quickened me with joy; richly giving,
It was Dvořák that alone seemed living.
He who had known the anguish of defeat,
The glory of composing at white heat,
His heart spoke to mine: "We must prepare
To suffer, yet conquer our despair."

✪ HELEN SIMONDET's poems have appeared in *The American Poetry Anthology for 1986* and in Frederick Jaenicken's anthology, *Trees*.

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Citizen of the World

Nirad C. Chaudhuri

EDWARD SHILS

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN UNKNOWN INDIAN ("an autobiography of a kind of life—not of a man") brought us to the point where Mr. Chaudhuri failed in his examination for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of Calcutta, refused to sit for it a second time, and therewith concluded that he must renounce his ambition to become a scholar, a historian on a grand scale, and a college or university teacher. This was in 1921. Thereafter followed more than fifteen years of intermittent despondency, penury, and contumely; during about seven of these years, Mr. Chaudhuri was unemployed and almost utterly destitute, depending on relatives for support offered disapprovingly. He was sensitive to the contempt in which others held him when he was in a weak position and to their envy when he was in a better position. From the middle of the 1930s, his critical attitudes towards Indian nationalist politics and his denunciation of Nazis, Communists, and Fascists, as well as his support for Churchill's demand that Great Britain increase its military strength, exacerbated the animosity directed against him. His large knowledge and his insistence on high intellectual standards were resented, as was his occasional display of a sartorial dandyism. About thirty years after his first reversal of fortune, on the foundation of *The Autobiography,* which was published in 1951, he acquired a small reputation in England and America; in India, on the same foundation, he became the object of even more raucous hatred and more vehement contempt.

Despite the appreciative and denunciatory attention which Mr. Chaudhuri received after 1951, his life did not change significantly. His reputation has grown, but it has remained small and to some extent unduly preoccupied with the unconventionality of his views and with what is thought to be his deliberate provocativeness. The slow, hard

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grind did not cease; his life was still very difficult. Now, in his ninety-first year, with the publication of *Thy Hand, Great Anarch!* (published this autumn by Addison-Wesley)—the seventh of the series of books which began with *The Autobiography*—it can no longer be denied, even by his late detractors, that he is a stylist of the first order, a scholar of great intelligence, learning, and subtlety and a courageous, wise, and honest man.

The first thing to be said about Mr. Chaudhuri is that he is indomitable. He cannot be imposed upon by man and he does not break under the vicissitudes of fate. He has always followed the intellectual path which has been an interior necessity for him. When he left the University of Calcutta in 1921, after his failure in the examination, he was humiliated as well as prospectless. The only prospect before him was the mortifying one of an "unemployed university graduate"—a condition very common and much feared in Calcutta—but he was not diverted from his intellectual interests; they remained practically undiminished and undiverted. When, through the intercession of a relative, he did find employment in the military accounts department of the government of India, his demonstrated capacity to perform the successfully assigned tasks, the high prestige of "government service," the relative sufficiency of his salary, and the absence of any alternative appointment could not prevent him from resigning after five years because he regarded the work not only as boring but also as alien to the vocation which had become clearer to him in the course of daily tedium. Then followed a period of several years of unemployment, no less distressing and very much longer than the first period of humiliation between the failure at the university and the appointment at the military accounts department. Still his intellectual propensities never relaxed; he continued unceasingly to read widely and intensively. He was determined on a career of authorship; he still wanted to write a great historical work.

Mr. Chaudhuri's first published work in English was an essay on a Bengali poet of the eighteenth century; the next, also in English, was a reflection on the inevitability of the Westernization of Indian culture and the insubstantiality of the "Hindu revival." His first ambition in the 1920s was to be a literary critic of the type of Sainte-Beuve, or at least one like Jules Lemaître or Anatole France. In the midst of the worst years of his self-exile in the desert of Calcutta, he was a co-editor of a lively Bengali literary magazine *Sanibarer Chithi*, founded and conducted by a small circle of close friends with the intention of deflating the pretensions of a circle of self-proclaimed innovators in contemporary Bengali literature. This brought him very little if any income, but it was an intermittent relief from the griefs of an embarrassing dependence and sheer impecuniousness, made worse by surges of uncontrollable biblio-

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philia breaking out in extravagant purchases of French and English books beyond his capacity to pay for them. The period of unemployment which ran from 1926 to 1928 was succeeded by about five years of service under Ramananda Chatterjee, a great Indian journalist, who employed Mr. Chaudhuri as an assistant editor of two influential journals, one in English, *The Modern Review*, the other in Bengali, *Prabasi*. He resigned from this post in 1932 in order to take up an editorial post which promised to be a more remunerative one; that promise soon faded away. From 1933 to 1937 he was again without regular employment, pot-boiling with very meager returns and receiving a very small amount of financial assistance from his brother. He suffered much at this time. He was already married and he was often literally penniless. Mr. Chaudhuri has had a wonderfully devoted, uncomplaining, and intelligent wife. She has sustained him by her quiet devotion and levelheaded judgment about his abilities and about all other matters as well.

It was only in 1937, after more than a decade during which Mr. Chaudhuri was in steady employment for only about half of the time, that he became, first, literary assistant to Dr. Satya Churn Law, a man of great wealth and prominence in Calcutta who was also a distinguished ornithologist and, then, secretary-cum-amanuensis to Sarat Chandra Bose, an eminent lawyer in Calcutta and a leading politician in Bengal. For about five years he combined his work for S. C. Law and Sarat Chandra Bose with work as analyst in Bengali on international politics for the Calcutta station of All-India Radio. His financial situation became better than it had ever been before. In 1942 he was invited to serve, in Delhi, as military analyst in English on the overseas service of All-India Radio. In 1952 he retired at the statutorily required age of fifty-five without even the derisory pension of an Indian civil servant of the middle rank. He would once more have been in very narrow financial straits had not the French ambassador to India, Count Stanislas Ostrorog, appreciating his knowledge of French literature and his skill as a writer, offered him a small income for writing the news bulletin which the French embassy in Delhi produced for circulation in India. He did this until 1966. The income from the French embassy, together with income from his writings, maintained him at a very modest standard.

After a late beginning, Mr. Chaudhuri finally succeeded in becoming an independent author. *The Autobiography* and *Passage to England* were published and well received in England; less so in India, although his success in England made some of the denunciations less vociferous. Other books followed in fairly steady and rapid succession: *The Continent of Circe, Scholar Extraordinary: Friedrich Max-Mueller, Hinduism,* and *Clive of India.* Now, Mr. Chaudhuri at the peak of his powers—and ninety years of age at the date of publication—has produced the

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long-delayed, long-awaited second volume of his autobiography *Thy Hand, Great Anarch!: India 1921–1952*—a book fascinating as it is long. There is no parallel to this achievement in old age.

In a sense, all of Mr. Chaudhuri's life has been a preparation for this book. The alertness of his observations, and the imaginativeness of his insight, the accumulation of his knowledge from reading and experience, the detachment of his large perspective, and the gravity and penetration of his reflection and judgment—none of these could have been achieved very much earlier in his life. Fortunately, his memory is as good as his curiosity, and his observational and receptive powers such that his narration of events of fifty years ago, like the descriptions of East Bengal in *The Autobiography*, retains the freshness of accounts of things recently seen or experienced.

Mr. Chaudhuri's life has been lived in only a few places. He has not traveled much except through his mind, but through that kind of travel he has embraced the whole world. Until his first trip to Europe in 1955, Mr. Chaudhuri had lived all his life in Kishorganj, Calcutta, and Delhi, except for trips to his ancestral and maternal villages and for visits to such places as Benares and Puri.

Mr. Chaudhuri is a puritan. A Victorian sense of privacy precludes the conventional sort of autobiographical self-revelation which "lets it all hang out." I must emphasize that although Nirad Chaudhuri led a hidden life, the world was not hidden from him. He watched it all the time. He lived to understand the world. His private life was respected, but it was made to fit into the relationship which he wanted to establish to the world: to observe it, to know it, to render judgment on it, and to avoid its corrupting temptations. Mr. Chaudhuri has dispelled the buzzing, booming confusion of the world and has never hesitated to formulate his own opinions on what he has seen. Except for a small number of friends, he has lived aloof from the world; he has not sought out the mighty and great and he has above all never sought their attention. Thus, much of the autobiography is an account of the observations which he made about Indian society as he lived in it in the happiness of childhood and the vicissitudes of keeping intellectually alive and true in adulthood.

The world has never ceased to be interesting to Mr. Chaudhuri. He is still alert to it, even in his very advanced years. He is still at heart a Brahmo liberal of the Victorian age, although he has disavowed the doctrinal beliefs of the Brahmos, and has elaborated his own views of faith, of man's life in the cosmos, and of the responsibility of individuals. He remains a liberal, and it is from that standpoint that he assesses the world as it is now. There are touches of old-fashionedness in Mr. Chaudhuri's idiom, especially in his liking for metaphors about the

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animal kingdom seen from an evolutionary standpoint, but he has never failed to see each event afresh.

Mr. Chaudhuri was never distracted from his concentration on his intellectual vocation, because he was able to render unto Caesar what was Caesar's—but not more—and to render unto the spirit what was the spirit's. He was able to keep misery and boredom from seeping into the sphere of what he regarded as his vocation. His vocation, which he discovered and decided early on, was to understand the world, to appreciate the great and beautiful things in it, and to write into clear and concise English exactly what he saw with his own eyes and with his mind's eye and what he thought and appreciated—and, in so doing, to live a life in accordance with his inner necessities. This does not mean that there were no periods when he was not almost paralyzingly enfeebled by lack of self-confidence and ill health. Yet he never stayed that way long.

He never allowed himself to be deaf to the voice of his vocation. Once he gave up his academic ambition, the idea of being a writer, not just a writer who earns a living from writing but a writer who lives up to the standard which he has discerned in the greatest writers, dominated his life. Still, until he was in his early fifties, he had little to show for his extraordinary knowledge of history and literature. He had persisted in his long-held desire to produce a work of historical scholarship, but it made no progress. He would not seek anything below the highest standard, and he felt it was too difficult to undertake tasks which might end by falling short of that standard. In his fiftieth year he began to write his autobiography. Writing the first chapter on his boyhood in East Bengal brought his powers into full play; he finished it in 1949 and it was published in 1951. He had crossed the barrier. It marked his entry into a new phase of life. Now, after many periods when the idea seemed unrealizable, and when he would not settle for less, he has come through in triumph.

II

Mr. Chaudhuri in his *Autobiography* wrote, "I have only to look into myself and contemplate my life to discover India; my intellect has indeed at last emancipated itself from my country but taking stock of all the rest, I can say without the least suggestion of arrogance: *l'Inde, c'est moi.*" Mr. Chaudhuri's Indian critics angrily repudiate this assertion in all its various forms.

About four years after its publication, while I was working in Calcutta, I attempted to turn the conversation with my host, whom I was interviewing, to *The Autobiography.* He stamped out of the room in a

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sputtering fury. The next day he apologized to me for his rude conduct the previous day, explaining that "it is impossible for us to talk about Nirad Babu. He has said so much to wound us." "Anti-Indian" was the main theme of the denunciations of Mr. Chaudhuri in India after the publication of *The Autobiography*. There was great resentment about his criticism of the present state of affairs in India. It was not rendered more acceptable by Mr. Chaudhuri's willingness and even pleasure in letting the chips fall where they may. Mr. Chaudhuri never uses invective, but he never hesitates to say things which many Indians think are directed against them. And they are not entirely wrong; Mr. Chaudhuri has taken no pains to avoid provoking these rancorous responses. The clarity of his style makes it easier for Indians to take umbrage at what he writes about them. The criticism has become less bitter in recent years; there is now more willingness among Indians to acknowledge his gifts as a writer, but the belief that he is hostile to India persists, as does resentment against him. It is alleviated to some extent by a smiling derogation of his admiration for England, as no more than an eccentricity, which implies that he does not have to be considered seriously as an intellectual personality.

Yet the belief that he is anti-Indian is not true. It is true only in the sense that there are certainly features of Indian society of which he disapproves very severely. He dislikes Indian politicians for their corruption and mixture of infidelity and sycophancy where personal advantage is in sight and for their readiness to fall into factional disputes. He thinks that Indians generally are deficient in their capacity for politics. He dislikes Indian officials, whom he regards as subservient and willing to serve any powerful authority as long as it rewards them with money, status, and power. Unlike many Indian and foreign observers, he is no admirer of the Indian members of the Indian Civil Service, who continued to serve the government of India after independence. He thinks that they were time-servers concerned only with their own well-being. He adds to this the further observation that Indians were always willing to aid foreign rulers in the subjection of other Indians. He disapproves of the widespread admiration and greed of Indians for money; he dislikes the superficiality and vulgarity of the modes of thought and conduct which contemporary Westernized Indians have taken from Western culture; he deplores their preoccupation with status, their supineness in the presence of superordinate authorities, and their harshness and lack of sympathy with those who are subordinate to them. There is no moral conviction in their Westernization: "Behind it lies hidden a dangerous void of faith, ideas, courage and . . . energy."

He thinks Indians are xenophobic. Indians were xenophobic even before the establishment of Moghul rule and their xenophobia became

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more intense under British rule. It simmered through much of the nineteenth century, when it was held in check by the assimilation into Indian thought of Western liberal and humanitarian ideas. Then, with Gandhi's first "non-cooperation" campaign, it came to the forefront of Indian life. Thereafter it moved cyclically, rising and subsiding and rising; it rose to a crescendo in the murderous outbursts at the time of the partition of British India into India and Pakistan.

Mr. Chaudhuri regards contemporary India as torpid. The defects of India are, he thinks, not of recent birth. At one time he thought that India of the nineteenth century was the heir of ancient Indian civilization, but in looking into the sources in preparation for the scholarly history of Indian civilization, which he once intended to write, he concluded that there had been a "complete break between ancient Hindu culture and our life and culture . . . in the eighteenth century." He now thinks that India is incapable of a vital civilization of its own unless it is subjected to foreign influence. Without the Aryan, Muslim, and Western influence, India would not have ever developed a significant civilization.

He is convinced that Indian spirituality does not exist. It is a figment of the Western imagination. He thinks that there is no creative power left in India. The Hindus are "a combination of putrified flesh and fossil bones." The industrial working class in the big cities of India "do not form a stable or coherent social class, but constitute an amorphously piled up and featureless detritus of the stratified human rocks of rural India." He is "thankful that the vast majority of the common people of India remain in their villages." The survival of the Hindus "is due to the fact that nine-tenths of Indian society consists of an inert element which is impervious to the active malignancy of the one-tenth." Indian society is a degenerate society; that is why it has been subjugated by foreigners. He himself, when he was younger, believed, as many Indian nationalists did, that the degeneracy of the Indian society was the result of subjugation by foreigners. Now he thinks that the degeneracy of the Indian character was the cause of the subjugation by foreign rulers, rather than the other way around. As early as 1936, he "wholly rejected the idea of a transfer of power to Indian hands by Britain as a possible solution of the Indian problem. On the contrary, I thought that power in Indian hands would be a calamity for the Indian people."

This all adds up to a very severe condemnation of Indian society. Yet, according to Mr. Chaudhuri, it has not always been that way. Indian life in the nineteenth century was for a time aroused from its torpor. Under the influence of Western ideas, brought into India by the consolidation of British dominion over India, Indian thought became animated. Both conservatives and liberals benefited from this first contact with Western knowledge, beliefs, and ideals; they thought that the "entire fabric of

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Indian society" had to be rebuilt. Earnest movements for the improvement of Indian society were set in motion. These movements for reform aimed to transform Indian society. The reformers sought to bring about the cessation of widow-burning, the right of remarriage for widows, the improvement of the status of untouchables, education—especially education for girls and young women—the promotion of science and technology and the diffusion of scientific and technological knowledge, the introduction of literary genres previously not used in India, and not least the improvement of the intellectual substance of Hindu religious belief and the eradication of superstition. The pursuit of those objectives and the public discussion of them gave an elevation to Indian life, especially in the great urban centers of Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay, which lasted well into the first quarter of the twentieth century.

For Mr. Chaudhuri, Bengal was the heart of modern India. It was there that a new impulse came into Indian life. That Indian culture, enlivened and deepened by Western ideas, was the light of India. That light has been extinguished, and Bengal, which was the leader in this movement, has now "passed out of Indian history." But it had not been that way in the Bengal in which Mr. Chaudhuri was and still is rooted. Men of that age "had a positive love for the concrete features of India or Indian civilization, e.g., landscape, literature, art, or music, which was always present in pre-Gandhian nationalism." The older generation of Bengali liberals had "a well developed political sense and awareness of official and political duties." He never met any of the members of this older generation of Anglicized Bengalis. "Even so," he writes, "I miss them."

Politically, Bengal was eclipsed by Gandhian politics, but the end came when Bengalis gave their unqualified support to Subhas Chandra Bose. The new type of Indian nationalism, which replaced the liberal nationalism and the conservative nationalism, both of which had flourished in Bengal under the fructifying influence of British and other European ideals, was intellectually retrograde. The new "Indian national movement was carried on in a growing cultural void." The promising movement for the reform of Indian society was forced into obscurity and then extinguished by the upsurge of Gandhian nationalism which emerged after Gandhi's return from South Africa.

Mr. Chaudhuri was at first swept into an enthusiastic devotion to the new type of nationalism; he was also suspicious of it. When, as early as November 17, 1921, there was a huge and violent manifestation in Calcutta to protest the arrival of the Prince of Wales in India, he saw the British soldiers, "alien soldiers, belonging to the army of our foreign rulers," as "the sole defenders of civilization." Nevertheless, he remained devoted into the early 1930s to the new nationalist movement.

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He had begun, however, to understand it better. He concluded that the new type of Indian nationalism had no positive content; it was driven by a "negative obsession." It was only after 1932 that he understood more clearly what had repelled him about the movement.

His historical studies gave him a long perspective on public life in India and much to think about; this and his own observations of contemporaneous events in India caused his own attachment to the nationalist movement to become more and more disabused. He had a "profound distrust of undisciplined mass movements." He despised the explosive folly of crowds; he was always distrustful of those who arouse crowds and who seek their approbation as well as by those who join them. The Indian masses, in his view, have two sides to their character: one is simple morality and piety, the other is violent action and hatred. Gandhi, he believes, appealed to the latter side. It was Mr. Chaudhuri's understanding of this bifurcation of the Indian peasant and the urban lower class of India that led him to develop a very interesting general proposition about the ebb and flow of Indian nationalist politics as a recurrent but unenduring surge of hatred in cycles of ten years. He himself did not see this until the subsidence of the "non-cooperation movement" of the early 1930s. His definitive detachment from that movement can be dated from that time.

Looking back over the Indian nationalist movement, he has little admiration for the contribution made by Gandhi to Indian public life. Gandhi, Mr. Chaudhuri thinks, was resolved "to abandon all civilized life and to revert to a primitive existence." He has concluded that Gandhi "had not the slightest understanding of the higher features of Hindu culture and its complexities." He thinks, moreover, that Gandhi's ideas have been without any influence in contemporary India. The movement created and led by Gandhi for three decades rested on a basic xenophobic irrationality which is endemic in India; it was propelled largely by an intensely emotional hatred of the British and British rule in India. It destroyed the promising Indian liberal reform movement and the conservative reform movement, both of which were intent on improving the social and moral life in India.

Mr. Chaudhuri became much more critical of Indian politics and politicians and Indians by the end of the 1930s. He disapproved of both Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose, the radical Congress politician who ended up as a would-be military ally of the Nazi-Fascist coalition. Whether this precipitation of his critical attitude was affected by the fact that he was standing almost alone at this time among Indian intellectuals—in Bengal as elsewhere in India—in his condemnation of nazism, fascism, and communism, and his concern about the dangers which they presented to European civilization, it is difficult to say. He was deeply

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repulsed by the acclamation of Hitler and Mussolini by educated and middle-class Indians and by the admiration for Soviet communism among the intellectuals, even by those who were not Communists. Mr. Chaudhuri fervently desired the British and the French to resist Hitler—he was very familiar with the military and political situation of Europe and was probably able to follow it with greater comprehension than anyone else in India—and he was practically alone in this desire. The danger to European civilization alarmed Mr. Chaudhuri, while the hatred of his fellow-countrymen towards British rule in India blinded them to the likelihood of war. In any case, they welcomed the difficulties and distractions which were besetting the British.

The genuineness of Mr. Chaudhuri's attachment to India may be seen first of all in his distress over the partition of India. It is not only that he regrets the frightful murders of the time of partition—he tells a little of this in *Thy Hand, Great Anarch!* There he draws extensively on his two articles in the journal *Now* which are the best ever written on the dreadful events. What he regrets above all is the breaking up of the country. It may, of course, be true that he is especially sensitive to it because of the final partition of Bengal and the separation of East Bengal from India. If, as his critics aver, Mr. Chaudhuri hates India, why would he suffer from the separation from it of a part of Bengal in which he has not lived for about seventy years? It is, however, not only the separation of East Bengal from India; it is the detachment of so much of Northern India from what was British India as a whole that causes him pain. Mr. Chaudhuri was an Indian patriot from the beginning, and he has always remained one. He had a sense of being an Indian more than of being a Hindu, although the Hindu idiom recurs persistently in his discourse and he understands it with the intimacy of one who has grown up and lived in its midst. He is "socially at home only" among Indians. He refers on numerous occasions to his love of India. He acknowledges that Hindu monism, "which proclaims the individual soul and the universal soul to be one," is "the starting point of my faith. . . ." In his final elaboration of his faith, he writes, "I have had the advantage of being born a Hindu and of being brought up in the Hindu ethic."

The fact is that Mr. Chaudhuri, although he has written a great deal about politics, does not believe that politics is the be-all and end-all of human existence. He is above all not a believer in democratic politics. This goes very much against the Indian intellectual grain since Gandhi, and most of all since independence. This is another of the sources of animosity of many Indians against Mr. Chaudhuri.

Anyone who has read Mr. Chaudhuri's description of the town of Kishorganj and the countryside of East Bengal, his accounts of his family and neighbors there, his observations on Benares and Puri, his descrip-

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tions of street scenes of Calcutta and of the houses he lived in there—which he says oppressed him—his portrayals of his calm, silent, solicitous and thoughtful father, of Mohit Majumdar, of Sarat Chandra Bose, of Bhibuti Banerji, and of Ramananda and Ashoke Chatterjee, or his discussions of Bengali literature will agree that such things could not be written by one who lacked fellow feeling for his countrymen. Mr. Chaudhuri's description of the three great rivers of Bengal—although far briefer than Mark Twain's portrait of the Mississippi—could not have been written by anyone who did not love the country in which he lived. Only a person profoundly attached to what is essential in India could have written with such concreteness and penetration about India and about the two foreigners who had so much to do with the formation, political and intellectual, of modern India—namely, Robert Clive and Friedrich Max-Mueller.

III

Simply to have criticized India would have been sufficient to arch the backs of Indian intellectuals. But Mr. Chaudhuri has not left it at that; he has been practically alone among Indians who have dared to express publicly their favorable views of Great Britain and the British Empire. This has deepened the animosity of many Indian intellectuals against him. This has, however, not deterred him. It has, rather, fortified his contemptuous attitude towards those Indians who are self-blinded by their nationalistic prejudices while, at the same time, vaunting their Western mode of life. All this was accentuated during the war, when British bravery deprived the detractors of Britain of "the pleasure of gloating over British cowardice." Mr. Chaudhuri writes, "I felt even more proud when the British people went on fighting alone, in this, too, depriving my countrymen of their second expectation of joy."

Mr. Chaudhuri's relations with England are no less complicated than are his relations with India. In both cases, deep attachments stand alongside unsparing criticism. From fairly early in his life, Mr. Chaudhuri took root in an England which he never saw until 1955 and in which he finally settled in 1970. Naturally, he has not become a native Englishman any more than he could cease to be a native Indian. There is little about him which could enable him to pass as a contemporary Englishman. But then no Englishman who was born around the beginning of the present century could be a perfectly up-to-date, contemporary Englishman.

Mr. Chaudhuri is essentially a late Victorian Englishman who assimilated as much of the intellectual culture which England had inherited down to the 1920s as any native-born Englishman. Although he was a

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small boy at the end of the Victorian age, the English culture which he acquired during the reigns of Edward VII and George V was the Victorian variant of that culture, richly filled with all that had gone before intellectually while being distinctly Victorian in its moral and political outlook. Mr. Chaudhuri's participation in the English intellectual tradition has been acquired mainly from books, but that is also true of the native-born Englishmen who possess that kind of culture. There is no other way in which it can be acquired.

Mr. Chaudhuri has made his career as a writer in the English language. The mastery of a language brings its master into the nationality which uses that language. It was not Mr. Chaudhuri's first intention to become a writer in English. He first wished to write in Bengali and "never thought of trying our hand at English for anything but livelihood." He goes on to say that "why from this early conviction my thoughts finally turned to English has its own history." Mr. Chaudhuri does not go into details about that history, but it is worth speculating about it because an answer would illuminate the singularity of Mr. Chaudhuri's relations with India and Great Britain.

There might be many plausible reasons for Mr. Chaudhuri's having chosen English as his medium of intellectual expression. For one thing, Mr. Chaudhuri began to write about public matters and ceased to write about literature. The national language of literary creation is almost always the language of the author's original nationality; there are, of course, exceptions, such as Conrad, and, at a lower level, Nabokov and Koestler, Apollonaire and Julien Green. But for writing about public or political matters, a foreign language is often used effectively. This was certainly true in India up to independence. English was the closest thing to a national language in India, and it was therefore an appropriate medium for reaching readers all over India about matters of public concern. It also offered the possibility of reaching an audience far beyond the boundaries of India, and therewith offered also the possibility of a larger income from writing. He might through English also reach an audience which would not spurn him for his political views, as Indian audiences were already doing in the 1930s and 1940s.

Mr. Chaudhuri was raised in a Bengali-speaking household, more rather than less observant of the Hindu piety and observance which had entered into the tradition of the Brahmo-Samaj. His father was a sensible man, a solicitor, not highly educated, a good father to his family, careful about the education of his offspring, attentive to their well-being; he was neither an Anglophobe nor an Anglophile. Mr. Chaudhuri's family was, mutatis mutandis, a Victorian family, and the great achievements of English literature were esteemed in his home. In his childhood, Mr. Chaudhuri learned the plays of Shakespeare and some of the other chief

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works of English literature. His first love was English literature, and he became intimately familiar with English history. Later, as a result of his reading of English literature and history, he came to admire such British moral values as rectitude, bravery, straightforwardness, and public-spiritedness. In the First World War, he was, in his sentiments, a strong supporter of the British.

Although Mr. Chaudhuri's intellect ranged very widely over world history and English and French literature, he met very few Englishmen and probably even fewer Continental Europeans. He had no contacts with Englishmen until he went to Calcutta to study in about 1917. A kindly Anglican priest, Father Prior at the Oxford University Mission, took an interest in him. In 1931, he was lent a gramophone and recorded European music by Christopher Ackroyd, an Englishman who taught in a college in Calcutta. In the military accounts department where he was a clerk, his remoter superiors were Englishmen but he had no close contact with them. There were undoubtedly others, though they were surely not very numerous. It was not part of the normal course of life in India for Indians to meet Englishmen. His self-respect forbade his seeking out the company of Englishmen. Despite his limited contacts with Europeans in Calcutta, Mr. Chaudhuri acquired a very rich English and Continental culture. (His accounts of his purchases of books—English and French—in many fields of literature, art, and scholarship endear him to me. He and I were purchasing simultaneously, in Calcutta and Philadelphia, the same deluxe edition of the collected works of Anatole France.)

Mr. Chaudhuri's intellectual life is much in debt to Calcutta—and not just for its centrality in Bengali culture. A modestly cosmopolitan, somewhat Francophile culture existed in Calcutta. Mr. Chaudhuri drew from it all that it could provide. There were good bookshops which offered large numbers of books published in England; there was at one time even a shop specializing in French books. Mr. Chaudhuri was an avid, perhaps spendthrift, purchaser of European books on many diverse subjects. Then there was the Imperial Library, of which Mr. Chaudhuri made rewarding use. Calcutta was full of zealous readers of Bengali and European literature. There were some highly cultivated Bengalis of sophisticated literary tastes who knew a lot about European literature and thought. Some of these were intimates of Mr. Chaudhuri. The Indian intellectuals whom Mr. Chaudhuri mentions in *Thy Hand, Great Anarch!*, his friends and associates who in the depths of his misfortunes, sustained him by their personal loyalty, seriousness, and liveliness were all Bengalis who wrote in Bengali and who loved the Bengal and its literature, which he, too, loved. None, however, had his openness to the world outside Bengal or could equal him in his familiarity with Euro-

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pean culture. In fact, not many Europeans can equal him today in his knowledge of the classics of European literature, history, and philosophy.

British rule made available to Indians through Bengali literature and the teaching of English literature, in Mr. Chaudhuri's words, an image of "British character with its courage, honesty, stamina, capacity for work, as well as gentlemanliness." It did this by directing Indian attention to those qualities as they existed in England and as they were represented in English literary and historical works. The knowledge and appreciation of British virtues which he got from his reading of British history, of English literature, and by inference from some of the things which the British did in India, made British rule in India worthwhile to him.

The greatest Indians of the nineteenth century—those whose ideas and ideals were expelled from Indian nationalism "by the negative rancour of the Gandhian brand of nationalism"—appreciated the benefits of the British connection. Mr. Chaudhuri writes: "No Indian with any education and some regard for historical truth, ever denied that, with all its shortcomings, British rule had, in the balance, promoted both the welfare and the happiness of the Indian people. The general assumption then was that an Indian regime succeeding the British would also promote these as assiduously. I however began to doubt this from the Thirties onwards, and therefore I became more of an imperialist than a nationalist." He concludes that the British Empire "had a meaning for civilized human life as its disappearance is showing all over Asia and Africa today." For India, too, it was beneficial. "British rule in India . . . I regarded as the best political regime that had ever been seen in India."

Yet, as Mr. Chaudhuri does not gainsay, it was far from a wholly pleasing scene. Mr. Chaudhuri had little immediate experience of the maltreatment of Indians by Englishmen in India. But the haughtiness, rudeness, contempt, condescension, and sometimes physical manhandling of Indians by Englishmen is very prominent in his mind. He thinks that by and large Englishmen in India behaved very poorly. They were obsessed by fear that the Indians would get out of hand. They feared a violent uprising against British rule. They over-reacted to Indian terrorism, which they could have dealt with quite easily and without excessive force; in fact, they did so quite handily, thanks in part to the ineptitude of the Indian terrorists. He still has not forgotten the rudeness of the resident Britons—especially the British businessmen and journalists who despised and feared Indians and who never had a good word to say to or for them. He disliked especially their apprehensive condescension towards Indians.

Mr. Chaudhuri says, against the British detractors who insisted Indians learned Shakespeare and the rest, in order to gain a "better"

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marriage, etc., that, in fact, Indians loved Shakespeare's writing in a genuinely appreciative and disinterested way. (He is certainly right in this.) He repudiates the contempt of the British for the educated Indian's appreciation of English and European culture. "When after reading Bergson or Croce, Mr. Hardy or Mr. Wells, with a sense of kinship, an Indian comes across some instance of ignorant superciliousness in a European . . . his primary enjoyment of a European writer becomes to him a cankering reminiscence of his humiliation." Although he forgives much, he does not forgive that.

This British misconduct, based on unrealistic fear and racial prejudice, did harm to both the Indians and the British ascendancy in India. Indian xenophobia was exacerbated by such degradation. "British officials . . . did more to discredit British rule in India than any nationalist could," Mr. Chaudhuri writes.

Nevertheless, in the beginning of the twentieth century, educated Indians, although humiliated by political subjection, still recognized that "apart from peace and protection from blatant oppression, which it had brought, it had also emancipated their minds, so that they could turn to social and religious reform and cultural creation." Mr. Chaudhuri believed and still believes that Great Britain brought to India an outlook which made for a tremendous improvement in Indian society. It improved Indian intellectual and spiritual life. In the words of the famous dedication of *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, "To the memory of the British Empire in India which conferred subjecthood on us but withheld citizenship; to which every one of us threw out the challenge: *'Civis Britannicus sum'* because all that was good and living in us was made, shaped, and quickened by the same British rule." It was this challenge which led to the greatest advance made by India because it resulted in the creation of a modern Indian life which espoused the ideals of personal uprightness, of a dignified sense of Indian nationality, of an appreciation of scientific knowledge and rationality, and of an ordered public life in which individual freedom was combined with a sense of responsibility for the common good.

Mr. Chaudhuri's repudiation of the poor conduct of Englishmen in India towards Indians "never made any difference to my historical judgment on British rule." He was long of the opinion that the finest phase of Indian history was the Indian liberalism which resulted from the assimilation and adaptation of British and Continental ideas; his regret about the present Westernization of India rests on his conviction that the particular Western ideas and practices which Indians have in fact adopted are departures from those which had elevated Indian life in the one period when India seemed to have taken a turn towards a better future.

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Although for much of his life Mr. Chaudhuri wished India to be ruled, sooner or later, by Indians, he had not expected that to happen very soon; on the whole he did not bridle at the thought that the British would continue to rule India for an indefinitely long time. He probably held this attitude while he was a supporter of the Gandhian politics in the 1920s and early 1930s.

At the same time, he also began, as he matured in insight and judgment, to see that the British were losing their imperial sense and the will to continue to rule India. Mr. Chaudhuri does not think that the British had to grant independence to India if they had been minded to continue to rule it. He said once to Count Ostrorog, "If the British had the guts to spend only one thousand cartridges in 1947, they would have kept their empire for two hundred years more." He suggests that if they had been "ready to spend one hundred cartridges in 1946–47, they might have prevented "the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Indians by Indians themselves."

In the end, Mr. Chaudhuri's pride and confidence in Great Britain have been disappointed. "At the end of the war, I felt that the heroism, intellectual competence and scientific inventiveness which was being displayed by the British during the war would be extended when peace came to the creation of a better world. . . . But my confidence in the British people and my hopes for a greater future for them was shaken in less than three months after the end of the war with Germany." The victory of the Labour Party in the election of 1945 marked the turning point. It made clear what had been happening below the surface of events. He was confirmed in this by the British withdrawal from India. He had already seen signs of this in the 1930s.

Present-day British society pleases him about as little as does contemporary Indian public life. The British people have lost their greatness. He writes: "Journalists, broadcasters, TV producers, and writers or intellectuals generally . . . are all clever and their mission is to ridicule all British greatness and virtues with ribald jests. . . . They are as rabid as the maddest leftist dog." And: "It is set against all forms of British greatness and [is] working in favour of British decline."

Mr. Chaudhuri has concluded that Great Britain is in a state of decadence and he foresees no reversal of the trend. The decadence consists in the refusal to acknowledge great achievements of great individuals. Disrespect for great achievements is a result, in his view, of the lack of courage to attempt them.

IV

Mrs. Chaudhuri had wanted her husband to go to England and to settle there ever since India became a sovereign state. She thought that

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he could practice the profession of authorship much more satisfactorily there because he would be nearer to his publishers and to his appreciative readers, and because in India "my abilities were neither recognized nor rewarded by those who employed me." He did not follow her advice because his three sons were still of school age and he was not willing to leave them and Mrs. Chaudhuri in India—as Mrs. Chaudhuri proposed—while he went to England. Furthermore, he still had before him five years of service on All-India Radio until he reached the statutory age of retirement at fifty-five. More than two decades later, Mr. Chaudhuri did act on Mrs. Chaudhuri's advice. By 1970, his sons were grown up; one of them was living in England.

I recall that sometime in the early 1960s, Mr. Chaudhuri told me, in the course of a conversation, that he looked forward to taking up residence in England, but I did not pursue the matter. The question remains as to why he has done so. It is, of course, unusual for a person approaching the middle of his eighth decade to transplant himself from his native country, but then Mr. Chaudhuri has never been a usual sort of person who is daunted by the possibility of doing something that is unusual. Had he done only what is usual over the course of his long life, he would not have become Nirad Chaudhuri.

England was as much the source of Mr. Chaudhuri's intellectual life as India, and it was a better place for his serious studies. He now lives in a village near Oxford, where he has access to a great library and to excellent bookshops. England offers advantages which India cannot offer. He does not feel himself to be an object of hostile opinion, he is near his publishers, and he also has opportunities in England to write in papers and journals of the sort which are not available to him in India.

Perhaps more important, England is not a foreign country to Mr. Chaudhuri. His deep knowledge of English literature and his familiarity with British history are far greater than that of most Englishmen. True, present-day England appears to him to be decadent. He is no admirer of "swinging London" or the "permissive society." He dislikes the slovenliness of contemporary English speech. He is saddened by British decline from its earlier greatness. Yet contemporary England is not the only England. The greatness of England in literature and architecture remains. The past is as real to Mr. Chaudhuri as the present. He does not draw from the daily newspapers or from television the spiritual sustenance which keeps his spirit fresh.

He has not renounced India. The best of the liberal India in which he came to manhood still lives in him. He has brought it with him in his vivid, discriminating, and capacious memory. Mr. Chaudhuri lives in a much larger world than do practically all of his contemporaries, and he lives in a much larger epoch. He lives, as he put it in the first volume of

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his autobiography, in "the fall of ancient Athens and in the breakdown of the empires of the Mauryas, the Guptas, and the Moguls, of the disintegration of the Egyptian empire, the passing away of the Babylonian empires, the unfulfilled promise of the Alexandrian empire and the decline and fall of Rome." He is at home everywhere, yet he also thinks of himself as living in exile.

V

How did Nirad Chaudhuri, small and frail and having to surmount so many obstacles physical, linguistic, national, financial, and professional, achieve as much as he has, and how did he come to be so at home in the great world?

To begin with, it called for enormous self-confidence, which he gained only as the years passed. He never renounced his vocation. Although he had always felt himself superior to most of his contemporaries, he could not for many years overcome the inhibitions about putting his thoughts into a major book. He did not think himself fit to meet those tasks which he regarded as worthy of being undertaken. He lacked, as he says, a "prompting passion." He attributes this in part to his lack of physical strength, in part to a weakness in willpower. (I accept the former explanation but the latter only with qualifications.) He said that he needed an external instigation such as Mohit Lal Majumdar, his old teacher of English at school, had provided for him when he was a very young man and when he was a member of a circle which published *Sanibarer Chithi*. After that, Mr. Chaudhuri seems to have gone on without the stimulus of a circle of like-minded intellectuals. He had some friends in Calcutta, but by the later 1930s his position was already so singular that there were no fellow travelers who could accompany him on his intellectual journey.

The Gandhian movement was another such instigation. Its stimulus—sometimes a negative stimulus—gave him an object to which he was at first attached and from which he detached himself by an intellectual effort to examine his own mind and to bring to the fore insights which his first enthusiasm had hidden from himself. Fortunately for him, he was driven by cognitive passion. Even though he still lacked the "prompting passion" to write, his curiosity to know and understand never flagged. During the worst times in his periods of unemployment, he continued to read and observe. Mr. Chaudhuri's English and French culture was acquired by an impetus working on him from within. It was his curiosity about the world and his pleasure in beautiful works of literature, art, and music and in scholarly works of history and philosophy that drove him forward. There was no one else like him in India to

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arouse his imagination and to embody before him a standard compelling emulation.

Indian society and its relations with Western ideas and practices provided the objects for his curiosity, observation, and reflection. He gained little stimulus from any intellectual community from whose members he could learn and by whom he could be stimulated. Mr. Chaudhuri's intimacy with English and of Continental culture and his original views about India were very much products of his own force of intellectual character and of the survival within himself by the traditions left by the surviving fragments of the Bengali opening to the West in the nineteenth century. These qualities still did not make him into an author of the books which he had always wanted to be.

When he finally came, at roughly the age of fifty, to write his first book, it was about India and the West, framed in his autobiography; the second volume, the great work which just has been given to us, is of a similar pattern. Mr. Chaudhuri has shown that he can write with great penetration about subjects other than himself or about those which are not immediately connected with his own path of life; it has however been about India and his relations to it that his great books have been written. His *The Indian Intellectual* and his several volumes of essays are about the India of his own times. *The Continent of Circe* and *Hinduism* and the books about Robert Clive and Friedrich Max-Mueller are also about India, albeit in a way different from the books which deal with the interaction between India and the West which Mr. Chaudhuri has experienced and observed at first hand.

Remote from Mr. Chaudhuri in time, the two subjects of his biographies represented in their lives certain fundamental aspects of Indian life and culture and their relations with the West with which Mr. Chaudhuri has always been preoccupied. *Clive of India* is about the life of an Englishman who, by his courage and strength of character, achieved more than anyone else to set the pattern of the British Empire in India; *Scholar Extraordinary*, his book about Max-Mueller, is about the life of an Anglo-German scholar who, impelled by his sense of vocation, brought India and Europe closer together by helping to disclose India to the West and by helping to restore to modern India knowledge of its own intellectual traditions. *The Continent of Circe* is about Mr. Chaudhuri's contemporary India, as observed immediately and by reading, but it reached far into the past of India and into the physical properties of its territory to explain certain important features of contemporary Indian life. *Hinduism* is about the most fundamental beliefs of Indian society in the midst of which Mr. Chaudhuri lived as a boy and which has never been out of his field of vision, even though, as he informs us in the second volume of his autobiography, he "lost faith in the gods and tenets of Hinduism by the time I was eighteen."

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Mr. Chaudhuri's being an Indian and a Bengali, and a European and an Englishman, all at the same time, is unique. He is perhaps the only one of his kind and there is no established name for the likes of him. Perhaps the old designation of "citizen of the world" is the only one available. There have been "good Europeans" in the past, persons who were entirely at ease in several European societies, who knew their languages, their literatures, their arts, and their institutions. Georg Brandes comes to mind, so do Ernst Robert Curtius, Karl Vossler, Count Harry Kessler, and, most recently, Arnaldo Momigliano. Being a "good European," however, although it demanded exceptional qualities, was an easier kind of thing than what Nirad Chaudhuri has accomplished, for there was already a common culture and a long history of the free movement of intellectuals from one European society to another, all within the setting of a common European civilization.

Mr. Chaudhuri is the real thing. His didactic manner and his obvious and justified pride in his mastery of the substance of several civilizations sometimes conceal their unique and genuine fusion. He himself is aware of what he has accomplished. In writing about persons like Max-Mueller, in whom he might be said to see his own prefiguration, Mr. Chaudhuri noted, "It is wrong to say that they become mentally, socially and culturally *deraciné*. . . . They can develop a very high capacity to assimilate themselves into any environment and move naturally in it. This is true cosmopolitanism which, in spite of its diverse elements, is a stable, though compound, product. . . . Such a life is no more ill-organized than a symphony but it is not easily put together."

More specifically about himself, Mr. Chaudhuri wrote that his experiences during the Second World War made him "a fuller *homo sapiens* than I was before, although all my life, I have tried to remain one. In making me that, it has not taken away from me any particularity I may have had. I remain a Bengali, an Indian, an Englishman, while being a citizen of the world. I have not had to give up anything in order to become cosmopolitan. My cosmopolitanism is deeply rooted in all the particular soils—material or mental—in which I have grown."

Nevertheless, Mr. Chaudhuri is well aware of the strains of this attainment. He knows that his detachment has had heavy costs. His transcendence of parochialism, his rejection of that feature of primordial attachment "which makes every human community to look on all others as 'They,' and therefore as enemies," has damaged his own standing in India where he is accused of having renounced his loyalty to India. "The only loyalty which I admitted I owed to my people was that I should warn them about the danger that faced them at the risk of being unpopular. This duty I have performed all my life, and therefore, I have now to live in exile."

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More painful for an outside observer to contemplate than Mr. Chaudhuri's exile is his conviction that Europe is decadent and Great Britain not least. All his life he opposed those anti-European, anti-British Indian nationalists who proclaimed "the failure and bankruptcy of European civilization." Now that he has thrown in his lot with Europe and Great Britain, it has turned to ashes in his mouth. Mr. Chaudhuri might be right about the decadence of Europe and Western civilization—there is certainly some evidence that he is right—or he might be wrong. Right or wrong, it does not lighten the tragedy of the man who, while remaining an Indian, assimilated so much of the best of European civilization and whose reputation in India has been badly besmirched by his devotion to the West, and who, towards the end of his life, has come to think what he does about Western civilization. This tragedy does not, however, diminish the grandeur of his own achievement.

Decadence for Mr. Chaudhuri is cravenness, lack of individual and collective self-respect, lack of dignity, a deficient sense of honor, no appreciation of national greatness. An individual or a collectivity with courage, the willingness to exercise power and to take the responsibilities incumbent on its exercise is not corrupt. He adapts Acton's maxim into "loss of power corrupts, and loss of absolute power corrupts absolutely" to describe or account for British decadence. It was in the unwillingness to live up to the responsibilities imposed by national greatness that the decadence of Great Britain can be best seen. It is the lack of self-respect in the powerful that Mr. Chaudhuri despises. He is no unqualified condemner of empires; he admires the builders and rulers of empires and great generals. Churchill he admires above all political figures of the twentieth century for his courage and his sense of historical greatness. It is not power as such that Mr. Chaudhuri admires. He admires the virtues which are often necessary for the acquisition and exercise of power. He esteems the courage which leads to great achievements and the pride in such achievements—individual and collective, intellectual, political, and military. Mr. Chaudhuri sees the decadence of Great Britain in the present state of British manners and speech; the frivolity of public amusements, the triviality of interests and indecorous conduct are part of this decadence. He quite correctly sees them as of a piece with the renunciation of power and of the aspiration to greatness.

The tragedy of arrival at such a condition is real for a man who staked his public reputation on the assertion of the belief that there were qualities of greatness in the British people.

VI

Mr. Chaudhuri's achievements are not those he sought at first. Would it have been better had he been able to follow the path which he

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originally laid out for himself? Was it really such a misfortune for him to have failed the examination for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of Calcutta, to have resolved that he would not attempt the examination a second time, and then to abandon his halfhearted efforts to try again some years later—although that second try was what his father wished and what he himself decided to do and then decided not to do?

It is nonetheless interesting to speculate on what might have happened had he been as successful in the first or second examination for the Master of Arts degree as he had been in his examination for the baccalaureate. Let us suppose that he would have been successful in gaining an appointment to the University of Calcutta or to a leading college in Calcutta—at best, at the Presidency College or at one of the superior missionary colleges, at worst at one of the many others, missionary or private, then not so numerous as they later became, and on probably a higher standard then than they observed during the years of the great expansion of higher education just after India became independent. Mr. Chaudhuri probably would have been a very successful teacher of the most intelligent students, gaining their devotion by his great learning and his own devotion to the life of the mind. He would probably have attracted a small number of faithful, intelligent, and hardworking disciples. Other students probably would not have liked him so much because he did not teach primarily with an eye to the preparation for the examination.

The relations with his colleagues would have been strained by the superiority of his knowledge and his contentious disclosure of their mistakes. He probably would have drawn to himself much animosity from his colleagues, because he would not have hidden the light of his learning under a bushel. Indian academics are even more given to intrigue and cabal than their European and American colleagues. His liberal nationalism and his critical attitude towards Gandhism, socialism and communism, fascism and nazism would have stirred the resentment of his colleagues against him. He would also have by this time been thrust into the position of a reactionary by the Marxists who were more numerous among intellectuals in Calcutta.

Would he have become the great scholar which he had wanted to be, a scholar who held before himself the ideal embodied in the achievements of Adolf von Harnack, Eduard Meyer, Theodor Mommsen, Charles Seignobos, Albert Sorel, Ernest Lavisse, and other great scholars of that order? The probability is not high that he would have done so. Indian colleges and universities have never been congenial places for research, outside of Indological studies. Mr. Chaudhuri's views on India, as they developed in the direction which was necessary for him, given his values, his own research, and his fearlessness, would have closed the ranks of the European and Indian Indologists against him.

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To do research on European or ancient classical civilization would have been extremely difficult, even if his teaching burden did not take up all of his time and energy; he could not afford the time or the money to travel to Europe to work there in archives and libraries, so that his scholarly productions would have had to be based on published sources and on those available in the Imperial Library and in the library of the University of Calcutta; hence he would not have met the standards of scholars in Western countries. (There was also a reluctance of the latter in those years before the independence of India to take any Indian scholar, especially if he did not write on Indian subjects, at all seriously.) He would have been further handicapped by his disregard for departmental and disciplinary boundaries.

The Europeans, who would not have deigned to notice him because he was Indian, would have found additional reason to keep their backs turned on him because he knew so much beyond their conventional academic jurisdictions. British scholars in those days were always ready to disdain the work of scholars who liked to "generalize" or who had "theories" or "ideas." An Indian with a penchant for doing so would have been even more handicapped—nothing could be less welcome to British scholars of those days than trenchantly stated works of erudition produced by a Bengali babu. The outcome would have been an unceasing series of frustrations compensated only by the regularity of employment at a small salary and limited by compulsory retirement at the age of fifty-five.

At the very time that he would have retired from an academic career, Mr. Chaudhuri's life in fact took a new turn. He wrote *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* in what would have been the last years of his academic career. It is very doubtful whether he would ever have written that book had he become a college or university teacher. As it turned out, *The Autobiography* gained for Mr. Chaudhuri a small number of admirers abroad, mainly in the world of letters and not much in universities. That book is beginning, very justly, to take its rightful position as a classic of autobiography. *Thy Hand, Great Anarch!* is certain to do so. Hence, looking back over Mr. Chaudhuri's painful failure of nearly seventy years ago, those of us who did not suffer it have very good reason to be grateful, or at least not to be especially regretful, for that failure.

About the careers of Sidney Hook and Raymond Aron—two men very different in their external features, in their societies, in their mode of life, and in their intellectual achievements from Mr. Chaudhuri's—I have recently asked whether they would have "done better" (whatever that means) to have followed more strictly academic careers than they did, and to have written more academic, philosophical, and sociological treatises, rather than given so much of their time to publicistic activities

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and to polemics about immediately contemporaneous events. In both cases, I asked the question about persons who had, in fact, distinguished academic careers and who had indeed raised this very question in their autobiographies. In the case of Mr. Chaudhuri, I ask not whether a shift of balance in a more academic direction would have been better but whether an academic career at all would have been a better alternative for him.

Mr. Chaudhuri's erudition was never poured into molds that corresponded to his ambition. It turns out that the greatest achievement of Mr. Chaudhuri's nearly eight decades of intensive study and precise observation is the record of the first five and a half of these decades. This is a great achievement because it is a record, clear and honest, of the activities of an intelligence of very great eminence, of a personality of clear and admirable lineaments in a situation of world-historical significance. Mr. Chaudhuri's autobiography is a work which gives pleasure by opening to us the village life of the East Bengal of his childhood, the Calcutta of his maturity, and the Delhi of the years of the Second World War and the first half decade of India as a sovereign state. Nevertheless, replete though *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* and *Thy Hand, Great Anarch!* are with learning, they are not academic works.

Mr. Chaudhuri never entered upon an academic career, and he therefore did not face the dilemma which Professors Hook and Aron faced. Yet, retrospectively, the three situations are the same, and about all three of them I render the same judgment. In each case, the best alternative was taken; in each case, the result was better than it would have been had the other path been followed.

A person of strong character has certain necessities of rationality and morality. It is not a matter of blind uncontrollable passion, of pigheaded obstinacy, sheer contrariness in the presence of temptation. The task which any person of strong intellectual character undertakes is the task defined for him by his intellectual and moral convictions, within the framework of the intellectual and social traditions in which he has been placed and in which he deliberately places himself.

There is an unswerving entelechy in Mr. Chaudhuri which never changes its direction. It was impeded and it could never find the form he had hoped in his youth to give it—namely, to write a supremely erudite work. In its course, that entelechy led him to acquire, and thanks to his power of memory to accumulate, a prodigious erudition. The person who has such an entelechy in him does what he has to do. Not everything that has to be done can be done. But for a person of strong character, what he is triumphs in the end.

The most frequent fatality of all intellectual activities in our contemporary societies is the gratifying ease of reiterating what is currently

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fashionable. Falling in with fashion is very easy—all the clichés of thought are readily available—and to do so, with a few spuriously idiosyncratic wrinkles, is also advantageous to one's acceptance and hence to one's career. To run with the intellectual mob is a common pitfall into which many intellectuals fall and in which they remain. They are acclaimed and rewarded for this with real money and spurious honors. This did not happen to persons like Sidney Hook and Raymond Aron, and it has not happened to Nirad Chaudhuri. Whatever they do, what is essential to their vocation gets done. They discover their beliefs by hard and studious intellectual exertion, they refine them by reasoning on experience, and they adhere to them.

Their beliefs are not the momentary products of enthusiasm—Raymond Aron, Sidney Hook, and Nirad Chaudhuri have, all three of them, washed enthusiasm out of themselves by reflection on experience and events. Dry and rueful judgment on the fallacies of enthusiasm is a salient feature of all three men. (Mr. Chaudhuri expresses this in his frequent invocation of the sagacious formulations of the *moralistes* of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.) They tell about the world as it is disclosed to them by the exercise of their intellectual powers. Whatever careers men like Mr. Chaudhuri follow, their minds shine forth. If they follow careers, as university teachers or as publicists or as free-lance writers, they always speak the truth as they see it, and, being what they are, the truths they speak are true about serious matters.

Thus, in the end, it probably has not made a great difference whether Mr. Chaudhuri became the great erudite whom, when he was young, he had hoped to become or whether he has become the author of two great autobiographical works. Whatever he would have done would have borne the stamp of his deep intelligence, his unceasing intellectual curiosity, his independence of spirit, and his unimpeachable moral integrity. *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* and *Thy Hand, Great Anarch!* give unquestionable evidence of these qualities.

And in arriving at this destination, after detours and delays and long periods of obloquy and insult, Mr. Chaudhuri has also been able to look back without embitterment and a with certain pride in the moral achievement of survival. Having become a citizen of the world, Mr. Chaudhuri is in the painful situation of seeing the world into which he has grown as being far poorer than he had hoped it would be. For a human being of poorer substance, it might have been an embittering experience, but that has not happened to Mr. Chaudhuri.

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Shame

VERN RUTSALA

This is the shame of the woman whose hand hides
her smile because her teeth are bad, not the grand
self-hate that leads some to razors or pills
or swan dives off beautiful bridges however
tragic that is. This is the shame of being yourself,
of being ashamed of where you live and what
your father's paycheck lets you eat and wear.
This is the shame of the fat and the bald,
the unbearable blush of acne, the shame of having
no lunch money and pretending you're not hungry.
This is the shame of concealed sickness—diseases
too expensive to afford that offer only their cold
one-way ticket out. This is the shame of being ashamed,
the self-disgust of the cheap wine drunk, the lassitude
that makes junk accumulate, the shame that tells
you there is another way to live but you are
too dumb to find it. This is the real shame, the damned
shame, the crying shame, the shame that's criminal,
the shame of knowing words like "glory" are not
in your vocabulary though they litter the Bibles
you're still paying for. This is the shame of not
knowing how to read and pretending you do. This is
the shame that makes you afraid to leave your house,
the shame of food stamps at the supermarket when
the clerk shows impatience as you fumble with the change.
This is the shame of dirty underwear, the shame
of pretending your father works in an office
as God intended all men to do. This is the shame
of asking friends to let you off in front of the one
nice house in the neighborhood and waiting
in the shadows until they drive away before walking
to the gloom of your house. This is the shame
at the end of the mania for owning things, the shame
of no heat in winter, the shame of eating cat food,
the unholy shame of dreaming of a new house and car
and the shame of knowing how cheap such dreams are.

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Retiring Abroad

The View from the North Riding

JOHN McCORMICK

In university teaching and related professions, a significant number pay homage to the notion that wisdom increases with age, not least their own. Lacking illusions about my own wisdom, I retired from teaching comparative literature in a large state university eighteen months before I had to, partly because I found it increasingly hard to break down the barriers of difference between my students and me. Distaste for male scruffiness set off by an earring was hard to conceal, and the sight of young women in running suits and punk hairdos made it a wearying trial to lecture or to induce discussion on my subject. My diction puzzled the undergraduates, and their diction aroused my incredulity. Although it sounds pious, I thought it was unfair to occupy a senior position when the profession was glutted with good young people who could not find a job. If I hadn't children of my own to see through university, I would have retired even sooner. Practicality apart, the conscious decision to retire early means not being turned out for bureaucratic reasons, but that the initiative is in the self—a healthier place for it, I think.

Having seen colleagues retire to houses in which they had lived for years, among surviving friends of decades, and where they tried to carry on their habitual activities in their habitual surroundings only to go out with a long despairing sigh, I came to think that retirement should also include removal to new surroundings. To remain might involve that slow fading, no matter one's efforts to maintain habits and connections subtly in flux. My wife agreed that to remove our persons and possessions was a calculated risk, but one offering either interesting gains or disaster. Either attracted us more than the fading aridity implicit in remaining where we were. Passivity is expected in the ageing, but passivity may encourage arthritic stiffness in body and mind.

The reactions of friends to one's decisions matter; thus I was concerned that some appeared upset that I, an American, Minnesota-born, should choose to live, probably to die, abroad, far from the customary skies. Although no one used the word, some people implied that I was being unpatriotic. It was the literal *trahison* of a single *clerc*, me. Our intention was appropriate for my wife, who would be returning to her English roots after twenty-five years in foreign parts, and some acquaintances concluded, darkly, that I was being shanghaied by my wife. My roots were shallow, even by American standards, but my affection for Britain and western Europe was deep. I was not being shanghaied.

We encountered great incomprehension at the idea of retirement to Yorkshire. London or the familiar south of England would have made sense to most of our friends, for in spirit they agreed with Sydney Smith that "All lives out of London are mistakes." Weren't we choosing a backwater? Possibly, I answered, but I had never found life in the front water as exhilarating as *Vanity Fair* (not Thackeray's) would have us believe. "Yorkshire?" a woman asked. "Won't you be cold? Where is it?" If

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Yorkshire exists at all in most Americans' minds, it is the Yorkshire of the West Riding, the *Wuthering Heights* country of Heathcliff, Cathy's ghost and howling winds. The appearance and recent disappearance of the word *Riding* may be confusing. Contemporary Yorkshire has a population equal to Scotland's and a sense of itself as a geographical and cultural entity less noisy but equal in intensity to that of the Scots. For good geographical and administrative reasons dating from the ninth century, the region was divided into thirds, North, East, and West, *Riding* meaning a third part and deriving from Old Norse and late Old English. With the efforts of successive Labor and Conservative governments between the mid-1960s and 1974 to reform local government, new administrative units appeared having little or no geographical logic, and with them, a nomenclature devised to eliminate the ancient (and beautiful) terminology. The success of the movement of reform is being challenged by the Ridings Society, which lobbies for the return to traditional terminology, and which organizes each August 1, a Yorkshire day, on which Yorkshiremen wear the white rose of Yorkshire to affirm their solidarity, both in Britain and worldwide, much like the Rabbie Burns Night of the Scots around the globe.

The part of the North Riding we chose to settle in begins just north of the city of York, under two hours by train from London. After an intense search, we found an affordable Georgian house of circa 1750 with an acre and a half of garden and woodland, lying in rolling farmland, and within walking distance of Scackleton (ten houses and a church) and Hovingham, population 320. York is fifteen miles away, and the moors, snow-covered in winter and heather-purple in summer, are within a fifteen-minute drive, readily visible on good days. We have owls in our garden by night and indignant pheasants by day, as well as many races of songbirds, including one that sounds like the nerve-flaying ringing of an English telephone. Much of the surrounding land has been owned by the same family since Elizabethan days and farmed by successive generations of the same farming families. They raise grain and hay for sheep and cattle and for the horses of the gentry who hunt, or for the racehorses that are bred in the area. The North Riding, like all Yorkshire, has been inhabited for as long as mankind has existed in northern Europe: tumuli rise everywhere in the countryside. Much suffering has been endured in the Yorkshire landscape; it has been fought over and died for.

Hovingham and Scackleton are listed in the Domesday Book. Five miles off is Vanbrugh's Castle Howard, and not much farther lie the Cistercian abbeys of Rievaulx, Fountains, and Bylands, destroyed of course in the Reformation, but still haunting and impressive in their ruins. Laurence Sterne wrote *Tristram Shandy* in his vicarage at Coxwold, a dozen miles off. ("Shandy" in Yorkshire dialect means "crazy.") Richard Sterne, his great-grandfather, died at eighty-seven, still in office as Archbishop of York, and a reminder that in the past people did not retire.

The Romans made the present city of York into a major military headquarters. York Minster, which dominates the city and the surrounding Vale of York, is one of the finest cathedrals in Europe. A church stood on the site from the early seventh century to 1154, when the cathedral proper was begun. It was completed circa 1340. Struck by the state of the medieval walls, one of our American visitors asked, "Is this place real?"

Like the surrounding hamlets, settlements, and villages, the city is indeed real, not reconstructed, like Williamsburg, to duplicate the past, but evidence that the past can survive and flourish if the alarums and excursions of history will permit. Guy Fawkes and W. H. Auden were born in York; Constantine the Great was proclaimed emperor there. Seven miles west of the city lies Marston Moor, site of a decisive victory of the Commonwealth forces over the Royalists early in the Civil War. Sir Thomas (later Lord) Fairfax, one of the victorious commanders at the battle, was to become commander-in-chief of all Commonwealth armies. It was on his estate at Nun Appleton, close by York, that Andrew Marvell wrote his most perfect poems while tutor to Mary Fairfax, the Lord General's daughter. The Yorkshire Ridings are the country of William Etty, Henry Moore, and Herbert Read. Turner painted here, and John Sell Cotman carved his nickname on a tree at Brandsby. Ford Madox Ford's most convincing character, Tietjens, is a Yorkshireman.

For an American visitor, the indubitable reality of York and its environs may be put in question by the impression that in both urban and rural North and East Ridings one has

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returned to what late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century rural and small-town America must have been. That impression persists despite modern farm machinery, cars, mostly new, on every road, and the proliferation of videocassettes, computers, and all the other trash of instant communication. The causes for that impression are many, but most immediate are the dominance of landscape, of solid and beautiful buildings, and of a tempo and organization of life that contradict the logic of the car telephone and the Cable News Network. Where life whizzes by in the new world, it loafs along in the old. No matter how preoccupied, people pause to acknowledge one another if only with the smallest of small talk. There is less knowingness than in the United States, less surface glister. Children tend to remain children until adulthood. No one kicks the dog, and the birds are tame. No matter its reputation, the weather is benign compared to the upheavals of the American climate.

The people of the North Riding are remarkably homogeneous. They tend to have long waists, short stout legs, and blue eyes in ruddy faces. They have heard of cholesterol but they ignore it. They drink a lot of the good local beer, and while they are often tubby, rarely are they obese. Their posture is erect. They walk fast and far and produce good athletes. The main danger of the York streets is being rammed by a double pram pushed at speed through the narrow crowded medieval streets. There are no graffiti but a welcome absence of the mindless obscenities of American city streets.

Not that Yorkshiremen are puritanical. A menu informs the public that the management has "no objection to discreet breastfeeding in the restaurant." It adds, genteelly, "However, please be understanding if other customers do object." A walk in a main thoroughfare of York on a warm summer evening produced the sight of a group of people drinking outside a pub. Two chubby women, laughing the hooting workingwoman's laugh, took turns baring the other's bottom and spanking it smartly. The frankness about sexual matters in the English press makes the American press seem quaint, an attitude that carries over to television with a vengeance. Gaminess is rampant.

One joy of retirement in our part of the North Riding is that we may choose as much or as little of city life, or of television, as we wish. Far more often we look to the moors just to the north, high peat lands, uncultivated and inhabited mainly by sheep and grouse. The absence of trees, fences, or power lines opens expanses of sky, producing the illusion that one is at sea. In some of the steep folds of the moor one comes upon settlements, apparently timeless, always watered by a stream and marked by a medieval church, more or less restored, a shop doubling as a post office, a pub, and a few well-kept stone cottages. On Bransdale moor lies Cockayne Rigg (ridge), hardly the abode of luxury and idleness of medieval legend, but a place carved by wind and rain, bleak but beautiful. The beauty of the moors does not leap out. It is an acquired taste, demanding waterproof boots and patient observation in all weathers.

Our mid-eighteenth-century house needed work. The previous owner, an alcoholic man of business who had wrapped his car around a tree and broken his neck, was not given to maintenance. The joiner (carpenter), the plasterer, the painter, the plumber, the electrician, and the furnaceman introduced me to a language and a way of life that to the tourist or occasional brief tenant remains concealed. To the craftsmen I was an old foreigner with a lot of books. They showed me respect, an open, at first reserved, friendliness, and politeness without a vestige of truckling. The older men among them were almost courtly, in contrast to the many workmen in the U.S. who call you by your first name and are breezily superior to your ignorance of their craft. I learned the Yorkshireman's great pride in his workmanship, and his pleasure in my pleasure at good results.

To save money and for recreation I did a fair amount of work myself. I found that my American screwdrivers were almost useless, for British screws have narrower slots than ours. I came to admire the design of British wheelbarrows, which have a lower center of gravity, and hence are more stable and less fatiguing than ours. In the course of putting down new flooring in a bathroom, I managed to drive four nails through copper water pipes just beneath. While my wife tried to stem the spurting hot water, I looked in vain for the shut-off valve and called the plumber. He came at once, although it was a Saturday evening, and I expressed my self-contempt and apologized for interrupting his tea (dinner), but he reassured me: "I've done it

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myself in my own house to pipes I put in myself." When his bill arrived, he had added no surcharge for the after-hours emergency work.

East Coast U.S. abrasiveness is rare to nonexistent in Yorkshire. Occasional abruptness is usually followed by a smile and an explanation. I discovered that if I wore a tie when buying supplies in the Saturday market at Malton, I was elevated to the peerage: "Bananas, milord?" the woman in the fruit stall would ask. Low comedy, to be sure, but how much nicer than low rudeness. I have been instructed by a bus driver resembling an ex-heavyweight boxer to "Move back in the saloon please luv." The joiner called his step-ladder his "mount," and when I offered to hang up his jacket, he threw it on the floor, saying, "We call that 'Charley Moorman's peg.'" A big blowsy-looking but very nice blond cashier in a grocery warned me not to confuse a five-pence piece for a one-pound coin. "If you do, they'll take you for a tá ta." Her *tá ta* was Bertie Wooster's *ta tá*, for good-bye, and a loose translation of the Yorkshire phrase would be, "They'll take you for a ride." Clerks and cashiers in shops still know arithmetic and do not need the universal American calculator or computer when they make change.

That small fact must again remind us of the homogeneity of the North and East Ridings. Because those districts are predominantly agricultural, immigrants from the Caribbean, Africa, and the Orient go to the West Riding, where the industrial revolution began and persists, though in seemingly permanent economic depression. The factories of Leeds and Bradford that attract the immigrant contrast with the pronounced feudal atmosphere of the North and East Ridings, where the middle class arrived late in time and few in number and where the industrial West Riding is held in unspoken but unmistakable contempt.

But like the Welsh and the Scots, Yorkshiremen in all Ridings have retained many of their ways and expressions. Yorkshire is their *patria*, the place for which they have fought in astonishing numbers. When the volunteer armies were formed at the beginning of the First World War, entire miners' clubs, entire populations of the young in village after village enlisted and went to be slaughtered. In a single regiment, the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, 9,447 were killed in that war. The history of the regiment was essentially repeated in World War II. Yorkshiremen resist immigration to the south, where the money is, even when destitute and living on the dole in a village formerly supported by a coal mine no longer economic to work.

The effort here is not to praise England at the expense of the United States. Comparison, however, is inevitable, always odious, and sly when only implied. Many of our daily exchanges are comparisons in varying degrees of invidiousness, depending on the sweetness of our natures and the measure of good or evil fortune allotted to us. And when does odious comparison cross over to discrimination, that signal of true education? It remains pointless to compare old York to New York, a pseudo-sociological folly. As I write, Robert Chesshyre's *Return of a Native Reporter* (1987) comes to hand. Chesshyre spent four years as a correspondent for the *Observer* in Washington, D.C., where, to my astonishment, he found that his friends did not bother to lock doors when they went out and that the majority of American school leavers are "stimulated rather than daunted by school—most of them having survived and thrived until they are eighteen." Chesshyre complains that the very garages he saw in Washington are larger than an English drawing room. But isn't it time to examine the proposition that biggest is best?

Although it is pleasant to read praise of one's country and its ways, it is unsettling to find praise for matters of which the observer has misread the signals. Chesshyre's praise of American democracy, our lack of snobbery, is a case in point. I suspect that American snobbery is subtler than the British kind and more insidious as a result. British snobbery is traditional, it carries well-known and unmistakable markings. Ours combines regard for blood and family with greater regard for money and possessions, with gradations according to education and accent that few foreigners can or do fathom. It is easier to move around in our society than in British, but that ease pertains more to our numbers and geography than to our practice of democracy. In the genuine regard of one human being for another that exists in the North Riding, I would give odds that Britain may be more democratic than we Americans are.

Chesshyre's account of the Britain he returned to in 1986 contradicts my impressions and experiences of England and Yorkshire of 1987–88. He found unmitigated despair

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among the young, poverty and resignation among working-class adults, intolerance, pettiness, snobbery, and narrowness of vision everywhere. Apart from districts where mines have been closed and factories displaced, I see prosperity and confidence where only years ago my friends unanimously spoke of Britain's "going down the chute." The middle-aged and the old have accepted that World War II marked the end of Britain as an imperial power, while the young in general lack the historical knowledge to care. Acceptance of the reality has been entirely healthy, I think. It is now we Americans who may be "going down the chute," or thinking that we are, while the Japanese take over and our national debt mounts.

Britain is of course beset with troubles, but the informing difference between our two countries is that British troubles are subject to rational analysis and often get it. American troubles, if only because of the numbers involved, defy rational analysis, whether we think of unemployment among the blacks, AIDS, drugs, crime, or whatever. Emphatically, the North Riding is not Cockayne. No Roman wall encircles it; it must look out over the North Sea to the Continent and to my native country across the Atlantic to the west. If the North Riding is still pleasantly parochial, that quality can only be short-lived. The steadiness and sturdiness of the employed working class contrast with what strikes me, an unscientific and superficial observer, as the philistinism of middle-class, and county types. An example is a proposal by Mrs. Thatcher's minister of education to "reform" the entire British system, from preschool through university. The various provisions of the Education Bill would cause "competition" among schools, increase "productivity," and, among other things, abolish tenure in universities. The results would profoundly alter British democracy, yet one would never know that the proposal had been made, apart from those immediately affected in the school and university system. Assuredly not from the dinner-party conversation I have encountered. In part that is because it is contrary to the rules of the social road to raise any serious subject at a dinner party. I am reminded of having been instructed as a young Naval ensign at the beginning of World War II to avoid three subjects at the dinner table: politics, religion, and women. Philistinism concerning education, or any other matter, is not a Yorkshire or British specialty. How many Americans would give one hoot about a proposal to eliminate tenure in universities?

To a refugee from "Have a nice day" America, the recent vast influx of American slang and idiom into the English language is a disappointment. That influence formerly was deplored, resisted, or very slowly welcomed by the post-Beatle demos. Television must account for it, much of it imported from the U.S. The British also suffer from another of our disorders: more books than ever are published, but few people seem to read. Eight out of ten in the London underground used to read books. Now it is at best one in seven. The rest read tabloids or study their shoes. This is all enwrapped in the fog of the 1960s and later anti-elitism, the particular manifestations of which include the change in announcers' diction from the opulently correct and educated sounds of the former BBC men to a whining pseudo-cockney or regional singsong of men and women alike. I retired to England to get away from "basically" in every other clause, from "impact" used as a verb, and from "problem," as in "he's got a reading problem." But here "like" and "as" are confounded, and I was told by a leader of local society concerning an orchestra, "They augment from London"; as in the U.S., the passive voice is disappearing. Meanwhile, the purposeful mispronunciation of foreign terms is not new, but acute to the pedantic ear when "Nicaragua" is tortured to rhyme with "what a wag you are." The pedant may be mollified, however, by finding that skimmed (not "skim") milk is not described in scientific percentage of fat but is "virtually fat free." Other Victorian survivals occur here and there. A garish sign on a fish and chip shop announces that, like souls in hell, "We're Frying Today."

The North Riding and England beyond it is not for everyone; it is not instantly palatable like Cordoba or Verona. If salvation for a district is possible, that may be its salvation. It resists change; as an officer of the Ridings Society told me, "Napoleon was right when he said that the English are a nation of lions led by donkeys." The district and the country attract me not least because it is not a disgrace, here, to be old. The U.S. "senior citizen" is still rare, although it's coming in. A simple "elderly" is more often used. One

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effect is that the elderly possess a dignity that the American senior citizen in his special leisure clothes often lacks. I have found respect and affection for the old in the North Riding such as I never found in my own country. I think of a conversation with a friend shortly before leaving for England. We had not met for a year or more. When he asked what I was doing, I said that I had retired and was about to sell up and move to England. "Why are you going to England?" "The short answer is that there's more time in England. At our age, that matters." "Yes," he said, "there's more time in England, and there's more love." I was startled at the directness and even the sadness of his remark, but I have often since thought of it, and as often have found it confirmed.

All this does not mean that I am a cultural traitor to my own country. I love my country, but it is easier for me to be a good American in England than at home. I must agree with Auden when he said of his residence in America, "You have to leave your country to love it." Nor do I urge an influx of retired people to the North Riding; I would only urge that if you are healthy and lucky enough to be able to choose, it matters to choose rather than have retirement thrust upon you. Re-group, citizens; return to the struggle.

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Close Encounters of the Learned Kind

Joseph Scaliger's Table Talk

ANTHONY GRAFTON

In my nineteenth year, after my father's death, I betook myself to Paris from love of Greek, believing that they who know not Greek, know nothing. After attending the learned lectures of Adrian Turnebus for two months, I found I was throwing all my work away, because I had no foundation. I secluded myself, therefore, in my study, and, shut in that grinding-mill, sought to learn, self-taught, what I had not been able to acquire from others. Beginning with a mere smattering of the Greek conjugations, I procured Homer, with a translation, and learned him all in twenty-one days. I learned grammar exclusively from observation of the relation of Homer's words to each other; indeed, I made my own grammar of the poetic dialect as I went along. I devoured all the other Greek poets within four months. I did not touch any of the orators or historians until I had mastered all the poets.

I had devoted two entire years to Greek literature, when an internal impulse hurried me away to the study of Hebrew. Although I did not even know a single letter of the Hebrew alphabet, I availed myself of no teacher other than myself in the study of the language. . . .

I have made many notes on authors both Greek and Latin, from which there might spring a vast progeny of Various Readings, Old Readings, Miscellanies, *and other things of this sort, the sport of the self-advertising philologians of today. Not that I think this sort of writing useless, or reprove any writer for it. That would be foolish. But I prefer that others should publish such things, rather than I. Yet, in order that our labors might bear us some fruit, we undertook the expounding and textual correction of entire authors. For we rightly judged that we could do this without any suspicion of self-advertisement.*

These words from Joseph Scaliger's *Epistola de vetustate et splendore gentis Scaligerae* (A letter on the antiquity and nobility of the della Scala family, 1594) make up his most direct and elaborate effort at self-presentation. Like the man himself, they have challenged the imaginations and the ambitions of scholars from the sixteenth century to the twentieth. Gibbon, the most famous reader of these lines, glowed with pride at having managed to read through Homer in as many weeks as Scaliger took days. And though there have been skeptics—like that fine English Hellenist of the early nineteenth century, E. V. Blomfield, who felt "horror and incredulity" rather than respect when he read Scaliger's words—there have been many more true believers. Biographers, above all, from Scaliger's own pupil Daniel Heinsius to the great nineteenth-century scholars Jacob Bernays and Mark Pattison, have taken this passage at face value. It has become the foundation on which rest many eloquent accounts of Scaliger as an autodidact in classical studies, the founder of European Orientalism, and the great northern sage who rescued classical philology from the Italian mania for producing miscellaneous collections of philological notes.

In the summer of 1973, when I went forth, armed with enough grant money to feed a church mouse and enough ignorance to sink a battleship, to write a dissertation on Scaliger,

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these words had burned themselves into my memory. The translation of Scaliger's autobiography by that strange Harvard scholar George W. Robinson—secretary of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, valued friend and learned adviser to Charles Homer Haskins and others, author of the justly forgotten lyrics "The Pessimist," "To My Radcliffe Pupils," and "Farewell to the Muse"—had formed my image of Scaliger as lonely sage and creative genius, and I went off to find my hero at work in the British Library's vast collection of printed books and the Leiden University Library's collection of his manuscripts. This research, though hardly magnificent, offered enormous rewards. I met many fine scholars working in kindred areas. I bought many rare books in dim and dusty side-street shops. And I amassed a very large store of now-disproved solutions to those historical and philological questions on which Scaliger spent his life. I will never forget the broad smile of the pretty Dutch librarian who said, "Ah, you've come to the right place," when I introduced myself as an American come to Leiden to study Scaliger; or indeed the broad smile of Scaliger's skull, when it and his other remains were briefly disinterred from a ruined church, and I had the chance to shake the bones of his right hand, neatly assembled in a Baggie.

The only thing I failed to find was the sage for whom I had begun my scholarly (and physical) voyages. As I read further, Scaliger's achievements came to seem more and more deeply rooted in the ordinary soil of sixteenth-century scholarship. Digging in his working papers, I discovered that one project about which he had both complained and boasted for a year and more, and for which modern scholars have lavishly praised him for centuries—a set of systematic indices to the vast folio collection of Latin and Greek inscriptions compiled by a friend—was silently copied from a manuscript index that had reached Leiden before Scaliger arrived there as a professor. Evidently Scaliger sometimes gave less credit than he might have. A longer course of reading in Scaliger's early works of scholarship confirmed and enlarged this original small insight. It became clear that he had learned a great deal from the teachers of his early years in Paris and elsewhere; in fact, it became clear that his elaborate self-portrait omitted not just substantial warts but major features of his intellectual visage.

No doubt Scaliger did learn Latin and Greek on his own; no one has yet invented another way to do it. But his earliest book, a commentary on Varro's *On the Latin Language*, showed that he had in fact taken in a great deal, by way of both fact and method, from those lectures of Turnebus that he remembered as merely baffling. Scaliger turned out to have learned his philologist's craft not only from Turnebus but from Marc-Antoine Muret, Denys Lambin, and Jean Dorat—that brilliant team of classicists who dominated the Parisian Collège Royal, the ancestor of the modern Collège de France, in the mid-sixteenth century. They revolutionized the study of Greek drama and Roman elegy, and taught the Pléiade poets how to adapt classical prototypes in French. Scaliger learned their characteristic interests and applied their characteristic methods. He used their advice and their discoveries—though he did not always offer much credit for these. And he topped off the Parisian training that brought him into the most advanced literary circles of this time with two years of legal study at Valence under Jacques Cujas, the brilliant historian of Roman law whom he himself described as "the pearl of jurisconsults." Yet none of this activity as pupil and disciple left enough of a precipitate in Scaliger's mind to jog or catch his attention as he trawled backwards through his memories thirty years later.

Scaliger's forgetfulness is not altogether surprising; few scholars have ever shared the zeal for paying all intellectual debts in full that animated his younger contemporary Johannes Kepler. But on other occasions, in the paragraphs with which we began, Scaliger moves from possible suppressions of the truth to definite suggestions of the false. He says, first of all, that he decided on his own to turn to Oriental studies, thanks to an *impetus animi*. Yet in his other great self-presentation—his table talk, the *Scaligerana*, to which I will return below—he tells a quite different tale. Staying at a bookseller's house in Paris early in the 1560s, he shared a room and bed with the famous Cabalist Guillaume Postel. And Postel—so Scaliger later said—"persuaded him that he should apply himself to Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac; that there were marvelous mysteries in these languages, and the Hebrews had fine authors, well worth reading, who had not yet been translated." This record comes from a lifelong, uncompro-

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mising friend of Scaliger. It was written down without publication in view, years before Scaliger described his youth and formation for the public. Hence it must take precedence over Scaliger's later account. It has two crucial implications: that Scaliger suppressed a memorable fact about his youth, and that he did so in order to make his own account of that youth more consistent and impressive.

The second point is more curious. Scaliger condemns those who waste their time on writing miscellanies and boasts of having devoted his own efforts to emending whole authors—an enterprise, he says, that he could carry on without any suspicion of self-advertisement. This boast of modesty is not too credible. Scaliger's first edition of the text of the Roman astronomical poet Manilius, for example, bore on its title page the modest words: "Joseph Scaliger, Son of Julius Caesar Scaliger, corrected this text and restored it to its pristine order." But the statement of fact deserves even sharper scrutiny than the value judgment that accompanies it. Scaliger wrote his *Letter* in 1594, long after he had completed the great series of editions that made his name as a textual critic, and ten years after the appearance of his first great systematic treatise on technical chronology, which he curiously failed to mention in the *Epistola*. While he was writing, his most recent scholarly publication was not an edition of an entire text but a miscellaneous collection of short notes on points of textual criticism and explication that had appeared under a transparent pseudonym, Yvo Villiomarus, in 1586. The book had largely been directed against a slightly earlier work of similar character—the *Loci controversi* of the young Florentine scholar Roberto Titi, which had appeared in 1583, and which, as its title suggests, argued for many outrageous and unconventional views.

It began, for example, with an effort to show that the Greek word *aporia*—literally a place difficult to get through, and metaphorically a difficult problem—could also mean a trivially easy problem. Such views were as silly as they were novel, and Scaliger had little difficulty in reducing his overmatched adversary to rubble. But Scaliger's book—and this is the crucial point from our point of view—is as miscellaneous and disorderly as that of his opponent. Even his earlier commentaries and treatises are more miscellaneous than one would infer from reading his *Epistola* alone. The inference to draw from these substantial contradictions between autobiography and life is simple. Scaliger deliberately set out to impose a retrospective order—and a clear sense of vocation—on what had in fact been a quite normally disorderly intellectual development.

To account for the discrepancies between Scaliger's rhetoric and the facts, we need only examine the nature of the larger document within which his "autobiography" appears. It is a public letter, long and stately, written to be printed. It begins with a long and fantastic excursion into imaginary genealogy (a characteristic game of the time, though one that Scaliger usually shunned)—one meant to show that Scaliger's father Julius Caesar, a famous doctor and philosopher in his own right, had belonged to the princely della Scala family of Verona. It ends with a short (and almost equally fantastic) denunciation of those who dare to say that Scaliger has ever attacked another scholar. It was ostensibly meant to celebrate Scaliger's promotion from private scholar in France to public professor in Leiden—his assuming of the intellectual leadership of the Calvinist community in Europe. It was actually designed to serve as a baffle against the growing murmur of the well-informed Catholic polemicists who knew that Julius Caesar Scaliger had started life as Julius Caesar Burdonius, the son of the well-known miniaturist Benedetto Bordon, and had changed his name to della Scala only when he settled in Agen, a town provincial enough that its inhabitants would believe his stories. The *Epistola* used formidable historical arguments to prove Joseph's descent from the della Scala. But it ended, as is well known, by provoking his enemies to turn up unassailable documentary evidence that Julius Caesar and Joseph were no Scaligers.

The document, in short, is not a self-examination but a piece of formal defensive rhetoric. It seeks to display Joseph as an intellectual aristocrat worthy to be the last della Scala, a man of absolute independence and originality. Accordingly, it deals not with Scaliger's great teachers but with his great feats of self-teaching. For it was never intended to plot the jagged and elusive trajectory of Scaliger's intellectual career as it really was. Rather, it smoothed the peaks, eliminated the dips, and made what should have been a bumpy and

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irregular line fit the smooth and rigid template of rhetorical conventions long used in orations in praise or defense of famous men.

Scaliger's formal sketch of his own life, in short, is inaccurate and tendentious. Yet it has set the lines along which most treatments of Scaliger have proceeded for centuries. Few scholars have questioned its basic accuracy of tone. No one has subjected its fact content to the normal touchstones of historical criticism. And some of the rhetoric it has evoked from its later readers—like Robinson's remark that it is "one of the most precious documents of scholarship and culture, the fountain from which a thousand streams have come down through the literature of succeeding ages"—suggests that the attention devoted to its author has often been neither historical nor biographical, but hagiographical. While no one can object in principle to the absorbing study of the deeds of saints, we can perhaps insist that scholars are more likely to be sinners—and we can be sure that hagiography is not identical with the critical history of scholarship. Scholars are too interesting for us to take them at their word.

Scaliger's other effort at self-presentation poses more complex problems, offers richer rewards, and has usually won him more obloquy than admiration. His table talk appeared in two distinct posthumous collections in the 1660s, under the titles *Prima* and *Secunda Scaligerana*. These consist of short discussions of points of scholarship, foibles of scholars, and notable experiences in Scaliger's life, taken down from his conversation or copied out from his letters, and then rearranged under alphabetically ordered headings. They not only won an avid readership but created something of a vogue when they appeared; the best of the early editors described them as "the parents of all the books later published under the title *Ana*, such as the Perroniana, Thuana, Sorberiana, Menagiana, etc." For seventeenth-century readers no longer wished to think of authors as austere and decorous; far less did they want to wade through the great Latin folios that were the standard form of learned writing. Instead, they wanted summaries of great men's views, a taste of the flavor of the conversation in their circles, and a store of anecdotes—all to be consumed as painlessly as possible. No wonder then that Scaliger's *Ana* were only the first trickle of what soon swelled into a flood, as the manuscripts of his contemporaries were ransacked and the scholars of the later seventeenth century ensured that their own witty remarks were taken down and printed. Ultimately the genre received the high compliment of satire, when the *Menagiana* provoked *AntiMenagiana* and other wits put out the table talk of actors *(Arlequiniana)* and nobodies *(Anonymiana)*.

Scaliger's *Ana* offer many rewards. As we read them, we hear Scaliger speaking what must have been the *lingua academica* of the French-speaking world, a savory stew of French and Latin that expressed his feelings with enormous point and force. Two famous samples offer a taste of the concoction:

> Ennius was an ancient poet of splendid genius. Would that we had him in his entirety and had lost Lucan, Statius, Silius Italicus and the rest of those boys *(tous ces garçons-là)*.

> Augustine is the best of the ancients. What a pathetic book his *Confessions* is. But he did write a big book of *Retractationes*. . . . That's good, to point out one's own errors.

Yet it would be wrong to exaggerate the homogeneity of the collections. The two sets of *Scaligerana* come from different periods, were made by different compilers, are cast in different styles and deal with different topics. The *Prima Scaligerana*, compiled during the 1570s and 1580s by Scaliger's close friend François Vertunien, a doctor, are mostly in Latin and deal more with problems than with personalities. The *Secunda Scaligerana*, compiled between 1603 and 1607 by two young Leiden students, Jean and Nicolas Vassan, contain more French than Latin and more spice than scholarship. Richmond Hawkins, one of the few modern scholars to examine the two collections rigorously, distilled from the *Secunda* a wonderful collection of pejorative adjectives and terms applied to Scaliger's targets: *rustic, bugger, arrogant, fanatic, great book thief, ass, lunatic, pedant, boaster, Jesuit, thick spirit, demoniac, beast, pig, fool, plagiarist*, and *ape* (among others). Nothing like this occurs in the *Prima*, and nothing has done so much harm to Scaliger's reputation. Hawkins inferred that the sober and respectable *Prima Scaligerana*, prepared by a mature scholar, was the better source. In fact, of course, this interpretation is another bit of

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hagiography. Any competent historian will prefer the naive witness who records what he sees or hears to the sophisticated one who changes the record as his sensibility dictates. In this case, the Vassani are naive and Vertunien a sophisticated witness. Hence, while both collections are reliable enough in content, only the *Secunda* can be considered generally accurate in form (at least where the Vassani and later scribes and printers did not garble Scaliger's messages). This hypothesis, drawn by Jacob Bernays from the two collections, is nicely confirmed by a letter by Vertunien that Bernays did not know—and that Hawkins published (but did not interpret). There Vertunien apologizes, as an old man, for having diluted the pungent phrasing of Scaliger's remarks with "mon style rude" when he recorded them in his youth.

The general authenticity of the two collections is clear in any case from many of the substantive entries, for these often overlap with Scaliger's letters and scholarly writings, especially where they offer potted summaries of his technical scholarly labors. One of the most original and influential products of Scaliger's last years in Leiden (1593–1609) was a short essay in which he used the words for *God* in the various European languages as diagnostic tools, with which he could define the larger groups to which each language belonged and identify the original languages (which he called *linguae matrices*, "parent languages") from which they were descended. In the *Secunda Scaligerana* we hear him trying to explain his novel linguistics to his young disciples in words of few syllables:

> There are four parents in Europe: *Theos*, the Greek; *Deus*, the Latin; *Got*, the Danish, English, Prussian, German, and *Goié*, the Slavonic. There are six other little languages unrelated to the major ones.

This and many other parallels no forger could have devised. The *Secunda Scaligerana*, furthermore, are not only unimpeachable but irresistible. We hear Scaliger reacting directly and without internal (or external) censorship to the most varied stimuli. He portrays the customs of the Dutch as vividly as one of their painters filling a canvas with grotesque figures of skaters and peddlers:

> The Dutch are tall and slow. They wash the streets, and are dirty in their eating and drinking. They are villainously ungrateful. The Dutch bargain and make contracts, father with son, over their affairs, they would not be willing to have given anything the one to the other. . . . In this country everything is permitted, as at Venice, provided one says or does nothing against the state. . . . The country people, men and women, and almost all the servant girls can read and write.

He dissects the failings of his colleagues with surgical deftness and economy: "Vulcanius's religion is that of cards and dice"; "If anyone asks Gomarus and Snellius if this century will produce greater men than earlier ones, they will certainly say yes, for they see themselves as the greatest sages. . . . Gomarus's grasp of chronology [Scaliger's chosen subject] is as sound as mine of counterfeiting." And he assesses the promise of his students, without envy but sometimes also without complete insight (it's curious to find him praising Hugo Grotius as a young man who will go far—perhaps rising as high as pensionary of a city).

More remarkably, Scaliger offered the Vassans prescient and complex glimpses into the future of the philological sciences of which he was the world's unquestioned master. He forecasts the great collaborative enterprises of nineteenth- and twentieth-century classical scholarship:

> There are so many splendid ancient wills and documents in inscriptions. . . . If some young man would take the trouble to collect them, and all the letters dispersed everywhere, he would do well. There's a lot in inscriptions.

He even adumbrates some of the deep intellectual problems that the study of the New Testament would encounter in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries:

> There are more than fifty additions or changes to the New Testament and the Gospels. It's a strange thing, I don't dare to say it. If it were a profane author I would speak of it very differently.

Suggestive passages like these, evidently meant only for listeners in Scaliger's chimney corner, have led many scholars to consider the *Scaligerana* the most revealing source for his ideas, because they consist of spontaneous utterances not obscured by considerations of caution or formality.

Yet spontaneity poses its own problems. In the first place, table talk represents most viv-

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idly the moods and emotions of the speaker; but these can be fleeting and even deceptive. In the table talk, Scaliger has nothing but scorn for his colleague Franciscus Junius:

> Franciscus Junius and Theodore Marcilius followed different paths to the same goal: ignorance. The latter reached it by reading everything, the former by reading nothing. . . . When I was at Raphelengius's shop, and spoke Dutch—not that I speak it well—he said to the company after hearing me, "Alas, I don't know how to speak Dutch, but I do know lots of other things."

Yet these characteristically acid remarks tell only part of a complicated story. True, Scaliger disliked Junius personally and was infuriated when he reprinted Scaliger's edition of Manilius in 1590, adding notes of his own and asserting that Scaliger would have encouraged him had he known of the project. Scaliger's copy of this book rests in the Leiden University Library (though it was discreetly omitted from the catalogue of books with his handwritten notes), its margins full of pleasant remarks like *"cacas"* and *"O asine."* Yet when Scaliger himself re-edited Manilius in 1599, he expressed approval of some of Junius's emendations—by the then normal means of plagiarizing them. And a letter from Scaliger's literary executor proves that not all the printing-house byplay between Scaliger and Junius had the former as its star:

> I remember that once in Raphelengius's shop—as the late Raphelengius told me—Scaliger said . . . that he did not know the meaning of a certain Latin word in Raphelengius's ancient Arabo-Latin glossary. Then Junius conjectured: "What if perhaps the reading were thus and so?" The perplexed Scaliger at once cried out: "How useful it is for scholars to converse. You're exactly right."

This letter, which complements the abuse of the *Scaligerana,* shows how dangerous it is to strip-mine that source for its richest nuggets without examining all collateral veins of evidence.

Evidently, then, we must read the *Scaligerana* rather as we read the *Essays* of Montaigne: as the record of a personality always in flux, shifting and changing even as one thought or emotion crystallized itself in memorable utterance. Yet other facts suggest that we must read even more probingly in Scaliger's case than in that of the fellow Gascon he dismissed ("What nonsense of Montaigne's, to write that he preferred white wine; M. Dupuy said, 'Who on earth cares what he likes?' "). Friendly and unfriendly readers have assumed that Scaliger speaks to us in these texts directly and without affectation. Yet we know from the famous parallel case of Martin Luther that table talk could be the result of a very considered performance, artfully designed and intended to reach posterity. Luther, for example, told the young visitors at his table that certain remarks should be recorded. Similarly, certain elements in the *Scaligerana* suggest that Scaliger was out to make the grandest impression he could, on his young hearers at least—and perhaps to project an image of his own devising to posterity.

Scaliger one day told the Vassans a characteristic late-Renaissance anecdote about the power of artificial memory systems—those mannerist edifices of the mind that scholars created by memorizing elaborate architectural facades, and used by walking along the facades mentally when they needed to memorize something, inserting each item into their image of a door or window or niche from which they could retrieve it when the need arose.

> At Rome a Florentine came to the house of the Ambassador [Scaliger's patron]. He was an ugly man and continually looked down at the ground. He knew artificial memory. We chatted with him at table. After dinner he asked everyone to sit in a row and not trouble him, and that we write any number of words, up to 50,000, so long as we pronounced them clearly, and recite them to him prettily. We wanted to give him only a few words, but he kept asking for more. The Ambassador's secretary wrote for two whole hours; you can imagine what a weird variety of words the gentlemen dictated. . . . He recited them in reverse order, beginning sometimes from the end, sometimes from the middle. He said he'd lost his natural memory. . . . Muret was there then.

This vividly recollected and crisply told incident is one of the most striking in the *Scaligerana.* It sets us directly into the world of Scaliger's youth, of the 1550s and 1560s, when so many projectors, from Postel to Ramus, wandered the roads of Europe trying to find buyers for their schemes to turn the seas into lemonade and to crystallize all knowledge in a single book—and memory systems like the ugly Florentine's were

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among their most popular nostrums. It neatly undermines the inveterate belief of that great historian of memory systems, the late Dame Frances Yates, in the inefficacy of artificial memory. The only problem is that Scaliger more likely read about than saw the incident that he depicts with such lifelike detail. The *Variae lectiones* of Muret—the very man, dead by 1603, whose presence Scaliger refers to—contains an equally vivid chapter on worrisomely similar lines:

> A young man who was Corsican by birth lived in my neighborhood in Padua. Rumor had it that he knew a sort of artificial memory method with which he could do many unbelievable things. . . . I began to dictate Latin words, meaningful words, meaningless words, so varied, so unconnected, so many, that I, who dictated them, and the boy who had the job of taking them down, and the rest of those present were completely exhausted by listening and writing, while he alone, still fresh, kept asking for more. When I said that we must stop somewhere, and that I would be more than content if he could recite even half of what we dictated, he fixed his glance on the ground and remained silent for a while, as we tensely waited. . . . Beginning to speak he reproduced everything in the same order, never approximating, never hesitating, while we gaped in awe. Then he began at the end and did the same from the end to the beginning. . . . He told me he could recite 36,000 nouns in that way. . . .

The vast, random lists of words recited forwards and backwards; the public character of the display; the expert's gaze fixed on the ground are only the most striking of the common features here. Muret is connected with both stories. And even the obvious difference between the protagonists—Scaliger's ugly Florentine and Muret's prepossessing Corsican—seems the result of a deliberate effort to vary the details in order to lend verisimilitude to an otherwise rich but derivative-looking narrative. The old Scaliger, in short, larded his conversation not just with interesting things he had seen but with interesting books he had read—like Muret's *Variae lectiones*, a *succès fou* after it appeared in 1559, when Scaliger was a young man, but forgotten by the young in 1600. Anyone with experience of high tables will know that their High Talk is often made higher by expedients like these, as Oldest Members rely on the ignorance of junior colleagues in order to make their own youths sound even richer and more varied than they were. No one could blame Scaliger for mingling his reading and his living; but modern historians who have taken his recollections at face value are less innocent.

In sixteenth-century autobiographies, on the whole, the moments that remain most gripping are the liminal ones that occur when the author or his *persona* confronts or tries to deal with beings from outside his normal world (natural or social). One thinks at once of Montaigne, comparing the Jewish baby at a Roman *briss* to "our Christian babies" who also cry when baptized, or Cardano meeting his spirit guide in the varied form of strange smells, loud noises, invisible grunting pigs, and spectral farmers mumbling gibberish—all of which helped Cardano to survive his present, predict his future, and believe that the course of his life followed a divine plan. In such conversations with the non-European and the non-human, the Renaissance intellectual vividly reveals the virtues and the limits of his imagination, his prejudices, and his fears. Or so it is in most cases.

Scaliger, too, confronted both the superhuman and the non-Christian face-to-face.

> Devils appeal only to the weak. They are not so foolish as to appear to me, I would kill them all. They appear to sorcerers in the form of he-goats. . . . The Devil is said to take on the form of a goat, hence I wouldn't eat of a goat. My father didn't fear the devil; I don't fear him either. I'm worse than the devil, and I've never seen any apparition. He said that the devil doesn't dare approach him. Near Bordeaux I saw a black man on a black horse in the midst of swamps, and my [horse] followed him while I slept. M. D'Abain and the others were up ahead, I alone was left behind. I called out to the man, he didn't answer. By now my horse had entered the swamp and if I hadn't been quick I would have died. At once I pulled the horse out. The others heard me and we wandered all night for seven hours. . . . I think we were led astray thus because one of us continually uttered blasphemies.
>
> I met a poor Jewess at Avignon, but decently dressed. The Jews don't beg, and help their own better than the Christians do. They don't let their own beg. She said to me, we are only three mixed tribes, so that we can hardly tell which we belong to. The others are lost, they perished somehow. And she explained to me why they didn't have learned rabbis. For they called their rabbi—against whom I disputed—the ass. Why, it seems that Pius V once wanted to expel the Jews from Avignon. Then someone pointed out to the pope that the Jews

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owed the Christians much, and he was persuaded to let some of them stay, so that they would at least pay the interest. Therefore they lost their best rabbis. They accepted a certain bankrupt because he was properly circumcised. When I laughed she said "Don't laugh, my lord; your Jesus was circumcised too." She told me, "We have no priests, for though many say they are priests, they can't prove it, we're all intermingled. Even if we had a sanctuary we wouldn't sacrifice but pray, because we don't have priests. They can't sacrifice outside the temple." I gave the woman bread. She was in fact willing to eat fish with me, but not meat. It's astonishing how learned the women are. They know a lot of Hebrew. They read their Provençal texts in Hebrew letters, and in Germany likewise.

How do we interpret these close encounters of the learned kind? It seems likely that in both cases life is reported rather than someone else's art. The sheer inconsequence of Scaliger's report of his encounter with the devil—"I don't fear him either. I'm worse than the devil, and I've never seen any apparition" as the introduction to a ghost story—seems to guarantee that the report is accurate and personal. And Scaliger's encounter with his Jewish bluestocking seems to have no literary parallel of any form. But interpretation is still very difficult. The first story seems physically unlikely, the second socially, as they are told. The strange mosaic of sayings and stories in which they occur offers little purchase for the critical reader, offers in fact no wider setting of any kind. Could the first story be a joke? I see no simple way of establishing Scaliger's tone of voice. And without that, the story eludes understanding.

The second story can perhaps be made intelligible. Scaliger established at Leiden a rich tradition of Hebrew studies. Though he disliked most Jews, he admired Jewish learning, and insisted that any student of the Bible needed to master "good authors" like the Talmud (and Ovid) if he hoped to grasp the background of early Christianity. The Jewess's tale makes a natural part of Scaliger's campaign for the merits of Jewish learned traditions. But can it be literally true? What sort of Jewish woman would eat in public with a Christian? Here we can fill in some crucial details Scaliger left out. Perhaps she was a prostitute; certainly she was a Marrano, someone of Jewish descent but uncertain adherence to Jewish ritual law, like a great many south French Jews of the time. But to admit that his liminal encounter involved not an orthodox but a marginal Jew would have made it far less dramatic in its implications. Hence Scaliger, again in search of consistent self-presentation, made a conversation with a woman who must often have dealt with Christians into a dramatic argument with a learned Jewess. As to her story about the rabbi—this more than anything else reveals the slenderness of Scaliger's relations with Jews. Had he really spent much time in Jewish communities, he would have known that the woman's story was one version of a topos found in every Jewish town and village that has ever existed—the explanation of why the local rabbi is so awful, which forms such a prominent part of Jewish oral humor. In the end, then, the story seems to rest on a discouragingly conventional experience, which itself mattered to Scaliger because of the slightly spurious authority it lent him.

High Talk, perhaps, is best confined to high tables—preserved as part of an oral culture meant to entertain rather than analyzed as part of the substance of a talker's mind. Yet one cannot deny the interest of these fragments, their flavor of a scholar's life incomparably more adventurous than those we live now. And one must admit that a tone of genuine self-revelation does often appear in Scaliger's pronouncements—especially when he describes his own sense of what it means to be a scholar:

> I wish I were a good grammarian. Anyone who wants to have a solid mastery of all the authors need only be a good grammarian. Anyone who calls the learned "general-purpose grammarians" *(Grammaticos pour tout potage)* is himself an ignoramus, as you will always see. All divisions in religion arise from ignorance of grammar.

This vision of what "grammar"—that is, philology—means, a lifelong commitment to honest reading and interpretation of vitally important books, is not expressed so powerfully in the discreet Latin of Scaliger's technical publications. And only the driest of biographers could hope to understand those neat little editions and terrifying big treatises without taking some account of the informal utterances that give a sense of the larger enterprise of which they—like all works of scholarship—are the fragments.

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The Abbé Galiani

"The Laughing Philosopher"

FRANCIS STEEGMULLER

In the spring of 1769, the abbé Ferdinando Galiani was forty years old. For ten years he had been Secretary of the Neapolitan embassy in Paris; and, from an inauspicious arrival, had become a personality of renown, the intimate of Diderot and of other leading figures of the Enlightenment. And then, when life was most stimulating to him and his talents were at the full, he was struck by disaster.

He had been indiscreet. Some years before, at the instigation of the French Foreign Secretary, the duc de Choiseul, an international agreement known as "The Family Pact" had been drawn up, designed to unite the various royal and princely members of the House of Bourbon against a threatening alliance of Russia, Denmark, and England. Chief among the intricately related Bourbons were Louis XV of France ("le Roi Très Chrétien" in the diplomatic language of the day); Carlos III of Spain ("El Rey Cattolico"), who had been king of Naples—or, more precisely, of "The Two Sicilies," as the kingdom was properly called—until his recent accession to the Spanish throne; and, third, Galiani's own king, Ferdinando IV of Naples, who was Carlos's young son, not yet of age, named king of Naples by his father on the latter's removal to Madrid. Because Ferdinando was a minor, Neapolitan affairs were administered by a "consiglio di Reggenza"—in fact, by one of the Regents, the Prime Minister, Marchese Bernardo Tanucci, under the aegis of young Ferdinando's father in Spain. Tanucci was privately opposed to the Family Pact, fearing it might involve Naples in costly wars; and he was able, because of the king's minority, to ensure that at least for the time being Neapolitan adherence to the pact be purely formal.

In 1769 there were renewed difficulties between France and Denmark; and the abbé Galiani's indiscretion had taken the form of an assurance to his friend Baron Gleichen, the Danish ambassador in Paris, that Naples would play no role in the event of open hostilities. The slip was reported to Choiseul by a spy in his service (a secretary, Galiani was later told, in the Danish embassy itself). Choiseul relayed news of the leak to his opposite number in Madrid, the Marqués de Grimaldi; Grimaldi was ordered by the Spanish king to complain to Tanucci, Galiani's chief, in Naples; and in May, Galiani received a distressing dispatch, couched in the official language of the day.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Portici [Naples]
6 May 1769

Marchese Bernardo Tanucci to Signor don Ferdinando Galiani

It is the King's wish that Your Most Illustrious Lordship leave Paris four days after receipt of this despatch, to assume your post as Counsellor at the Supreme Court of Commerce. I send this order in the King's name, to take effect immediately.

The message broke Galiani's heart. He and his seventy-year-old chief in Naples had long been friends, and, to the extent possible in diplomatic circles, confidants. Throughout

✪ FRANCIS STEEGMULLER is writing on the friendship between Madame d'Epinay and the Abbé Galiani. He has recently completed a translation of Flaubert's letters to George Sand.

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Galiani's service in Paris, the two men, bypassing the rather dim Conde de Cantillana, Spanish-born Neapolitan ambassador to France and Galiani's immediate superior, had regularly exchanged information on countless matters of state, commerce, and society. Meanwhile, Galiani had become a Parisian, at home in the city that was commonly held to be intellectually, socially, and artistically the capital of the civilized world. But his mistake was fatal. Tanucci had to deny any knowledge of the message to the Dane. And Galiani had to go.

Claiming ignorance of the reason for his recall, he replied in dismay to the dispatch from his friend and superior:

PARIS, 29 MAY 1769

Ferdinando Galiani to Marchese Tanucci

Eccellenza: About two months ago a diatribe against me, though couched in very general terms, was delivered by the Duc de Choiseul to Cantillana, making both the Ambassador and myself fear that news of some kind concerning me might arrive here this week. Neither he nor I had reason, however, to expect the message just received. There are two ambassadors here, both persons of the greatest importance [Cantillana, and the Spanish ambassador, the Conde de Fuentes], who are familiar with my conduct and can vouch for me: they are my obvious judges in Paris. Both are fond of me and in every way satisfied with my conduct, and I had imagined myself immune to official misfortune. Such is not the case, and I have suffered the greatest blow, apart from the death of the King, that could befall me. If I have deserved my fate, I submit; if I have not, may God forgive whoever did me this injustice. It was certainly not Your Excellency. . . . But I shall blindly obey the King's command. Such is my desire. . . .

The day I received the order I could eat neither dinner nor supper. That night I had a high fever, with violent convulsions. The next day I forced myself to go out, to finish some business that I think will be of service to the Queen. I seemed to be better, but neither appetite nor strength has returned, and I cannot sleep. This is the fourth day I have been unable to eat. Yesterday my fever returned, with renewed convulsions during the night. What frightens me is a numbness in my right side and right leg. . . . Meanwhile I have attended to my affairs as best I could. I have sold my horses and my carriage and done my packing. . . .

During his final few weeks (he was granted a short extension on grounds of ill health), Galiani bade farewell to his Parisian friends. "Le petit abbé nous a dit adieu," Denis Diderot wrote to his friend Sophie Volland. And Galiani himself apparently sent, to another intimate, a sorrowful letter:

I have not had the courage to take leave of you in person. It is a terrible thing for an affectionate man to separate himself from his friends and from those he has loved, esteemed and honored—from all those who have made my life in France a joy. *Adieu, mon cher ami!* I will write to you, and I hope you will sometimes send news of your well-being and keep me abreast of developments in the sciences, so that I may believe I have not yet completely left this world. Farewell, dear friend: remember me when you are among the charming people I have known: my heart will always retain the sweet and tender memory of so worthy and admirable a friend.

He left Paris in mid-June—"heartbroken," says his Neapolitan biographer, Fausto Nicolini, "but not without taking along in his coach a young woman whose presence was intended to alleviate the boredom of the journey." (Before departing, Galiani had asked his friend Dr. Angelo Gatti, an Italian physician practicing in France, to pay twelve francs a month to a certain madame de la Daubinière in the rue St. Honoré, "the mother of an infant child.")

In Paris, Galiani had left behind something other than heart, friends, mistress, and child. To Diderot, and to Mme Louise d'Epinay, his particular friend among the French bluestockings, he had confided a manuscript. They knew what it was, and promised to see it through the press.

The Marchese Tanucci and Ferdinando Galiani had been associated since 1749, when Tanucci had sentenced the twenty-year-old Galiani and his friend Pasquale Carcani to "prison" (actually a few days' "fasting and prayer" in a monastery) following the complaint of some Neapolitan worthies whom the two young men had caricatured in a pamphlet. Galiani and his older brother Bernardo (later the translator, into Italian, of Vitruvius's *De Architectura)* had been carefully educated under the aegis of their eminent uncle, Archbishop Celestino Galiani, provost of advanced studies at the University of Naples, First Chaplain to the king, and influential in the

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formation of governmental policy. When the two culprits emerged from jail, Tanucci added them both to his staff in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (Pasquale Carcani would remain Galiani's friend, and one of Tanucci's secretaries, for many years. The letter of dismissal sent to Paris in May 1769 was in the hand—perhaps only half-reluctant, since he missed his friend—of Carcani.)

Galiani was precocious and brilliant. While in his early twenties he published an influential and extraordinarily learned history of money, *Della Moneta*, much praised by economists and other scholars. (It has been repeatedly republished in Italy, and was reissued in France as recently as 1955.) The king, who had accepted the dedication of the book to please his chaplain, rewarded the chaplain's young nephew with the annual income from the lands of several abbeys in Calabria. To qualify for these profitable sinecures, Galiani went through the formality of taking minor orders—acquiring in the process his title of abbé. No study of theology was required; whether he was tonsured is not known; and if he made a vow of chastity, it never impeded his womanizing. (There exists a letter from the archbishop, advising his nephew, "Your hair isn't the most beautiful in the world, and besides, in a wig you would appear a little taller"; and, in a letter of condolence on the archbishop's death in 1753, a friend cautioned the young abbé: "You must cut down the great expense you lay out for women.") For a year he traveled in Italy, acquiring a wide acquaintance among his fellow scholars; and on his return became the youngest of the fifteen members of the Royal Herculanean Academy—a body founded by the king, at Tanucci's urging, to publish a subsequently celebrated series of illustrated volumes on the recent excavations of the ancient city that had lain buried since the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in A.D. 79. He wrote on geology, presenting a collection of stones from Vesuvius to Pope Benedict XIV, and produced a number of works on archaeology and the classics. He loved the Latin poets, especially Horace—a taste he was later to share with Diderot. He was thirty years old when Tanucci sent him to Paris in 1759 to supplement and keep watch on the ambassador.

Galiani was not happy during his first French weeks. The northern spring was chilly for a Neapolitan, and his reception at court was wounding. Some time later he was at Versailles with Diderot, who, having an eye for everything, commented on the trees in the royal park. "How tall they are, and straight, and slender!" "Like courtiers," Galiani replied. By that time he was perhaps able to say it cheerfully; but, on the day of his presentation at court by Cantillana, the fine flower of French nobility had greeted his appearance with snickers or open laughter. Galiani had been born abnormally small, and his full height never exceeded four-and-a-half feet. In Naples even today one sees numbers of very short men and women; Neapolitan raillery on varieties of human appearance is apt to be of a traditional sort, given and taken with more or less good nature: the mocking laughter at Versailles—which to us recalls Rigoletto's "Cortigiani, vil razza dannata"—was perhaps all the greater because the victim was a foreign curiosity. Galiani's instant response—some say he made it to the king himself—was: "What you see now is but a sample of the Secretary: the complete Secretary will come later." The riposte, and other sallies made during the following weeks, brought him favor, formally ratified when the king was heard to remark, in Cantillana's presence, that he "understood that the abbé Galiani was a very witty man."

When Cantillana was called to Spain for six months to succeed to the title and estates of his older brother, Tanucci appointed Galiani *chargé d'affaires ad interim*. By now Paris had won him—and he had conquered Paris. Introduced by the abbé André Morellet, a journalist and man about town who had visited him in Naples, he was soon sought after for the extraordinary range of his knowledge, always lightly displayed: for his fund of stories, his wit, and his charming Neapolitan ease of manner. He was made much of by a celebrated trio of ladies: the blind Mme du Deffand (Horace Walpole's friend), who held her salon in the rue Saint-Dominique; Mme Geoffrin in the rue Saint-Honoré, renowned for interrupting longwinded guests with a tart "Voilà qui est bien"; and Mlle de Lespinasse, d'Alembert's love, in rue Neuve des Petits-Champs. To these should be added Mme Necker, wife of the financier, in the rue de Cléry; Mme d'Holbach in the rue Royale, wife of the author of articles in the *Encyclopédie* and of heretical philosophical works

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published under pseudonyms; and Mme Helvétius in the rue Saint-Anne, whose husband's book on *L'Esprit* had been burned by the public hangman. But Galiani's particular friend among the intellectual ladies was Mme d'Epinay, at her houses in and near Paris. He had been introduced to her by her friend the gallicized German Melchior Grimm, author of a celebrated private newsletter that went out regularly from Paris, handwritten and uncensored, delivered by diplomatic pouch to subscribers outside France, who included princely readers in Germany and Scandinavia.

Casanova, in his *Memoirs*, recounts his meeting with Galiani:

> I made the acquaintance of the Abbé Galiani, the secretary of the Neapolitan embassy. . . . [He] was a man of wit. He had a knack of making the most serious subjects appear comic; and being a good talker, speaking French with the ineradicable Neapolitan accent, he was a favorite in every circle he cared to enter. The Abbé de la Ville told him that Voltaire had complained that his *Henriade* had been translated into Neapolitan verse in such sort that it excited laughter.
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> "Voltaire is wrong," said Galiani, "for the Neapolitan dialect is of such a nature that it is impossible to write verses in it that are not laughable. And why should he be vexed? He who makes people laugh is sure of being beloved. The Neapolitan dialect is truly a singular one; we have in it translations of the Bible and of the *Iliad*, and both are comic."
>
> "I can imagine that the Bible would be, but I should not have thought that that would have been the case with the *Iliad*."
>
> "It is, nevertheless."

Everybody welcomed the abbé. Edward Gibbon, who often saw Galiani in Paris, called him "the laughing philosopher."

So began Galiani's infatuation with Paris—an infatuation so great as to blind him to the merits of the city from which he had come. Naples in that era was not the mere provincial backwater it came to seem to the Parisianized abbé. In the winter, especially, many foreign visitors enjoyed the city's climate and society, its theater and music, particularly its opera and *opera buffa*: Pergolesi, Paisiello, and Cimarosa are only the most prominent of the eighteenth-century Neapolitan composers. Not to mention the famous antiquities—the recently disclosed sites of Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Stabia, and the great collections of marbles, bronzes, and mosaics to be seen, by the privileged, in the palace at Portici and soon to be put on public view in the new museum in the city. Nor was Naples intellectually stagnant: Galiani himself was one of the followers of the great Vico, and was well acquainted with the others, among them the political philosopher Gaetano Filangieri, admired by Benjamin Franklin and Goethe.

In the spring of 1765, granted six months' sick leave by Tanucci, Galiani left for Naples, to take the baths on nearby Ischia. His cure completed, he was eager to return to Paris, but was detained by the Prime Minister for more than a year, to assist in drawing up a commercial treaty between Naples and France.

On his arrival, Galiani had found Naples and its environs emerging from famine and a subsequent epidemic that had caused thousands of deaths in the previous year. Tanucci's letters to Galiani written during those events had contained dramatic and desperate reports of the disaster—denunciations of profiteers, of the inefficient and indifferent officials in the Food Office, of the callousness of the rich; and they had reported his attempts, continually frustrated despite his high position, to import grain from abroad. Galiani, in Paris, had sought to have grain shipped to Naples from Marseilles; and when that attempt also failed he could send only sympathy and suggestions, the latter including the immediate importation from the north, and the cultivation, near Naples itself, of potatoes, turnips, and other vegetables then locally unknown. The first plantings of these, Galiani suggested, should be made by the royal gardeners in the fields surrounding the palaces of Capodimonte and Portici: the produce could easily be sold to the many English inhabitants of the city, who were accustomed to such fare; and thus introduced among Neapolitans, who would spread the word. "The well-to-do would not eat them," Galiani wrote, "because they are crude and insipid fare; but the poor, and the peasants in the surrounding countryside, would find them delicious." But the Tuscan-born Tanucci, who never completely rid himself of a certain contempt for his adopted southern city, replied that although he would order a little potato-planting throughout the kingdom if Galiani would send him tubers, he was sure that such an

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experiment would be useless in Naples itself. "Here nobody wants anything foreign except vice, luxury, and perdition. Capodimonte and Portici are to be kept either wooded for pheasants, or as pleasure-gardens: sacred territory, not to be profaned by anything so commonplace and rustic."

(Unexpected news about potatoes in southern Italy came to Galiani from some *zampognari*, bagpipe-playing shepherds from the Abruzzi, whom he met at this time in Paris. It was, and to a certain extent still is, their custom to travel to distant cities during the holy seasons and play their reedy regional music in the streets. One sees and hears them at Christmas time in Rome and other Italian cities, usually in pairs, wearing rustic fur jackets and white leggings, an upturned hat on the ground beside them to receive the contributions of passersby. "Let me tell you that a few days ago there arrived here in Paris several *zampognari* who are making their usual rounds in Europe," Galiani wrote to Tanucci on April 30, 1754. "I advised them to buy potato-seed in England and sow it when they returned home. They told me that several of their compatriots had already taken some home with them last year and sown it with success. I cannot tell you how pleased I was to hear this. . . . In only forty years this vegetable, imported from America, has already covered the fields of Ireland, England, Germany, Switzerland and most of France. If you consider that during that time there have been published more than a thousand dissertations on the administration of the grain supply, it has to be said that a single potato is better than any theory.")

During Galiani's absence from Paris (he was away, on that occasion, for eighteen months) Choiseul had begun to suspect him of being a diplomatic inconvenience. He suggested to Tanucci that Galiani be kept in Naples: that "his brilliant intellect merited a permanent, senior post at the Neapolitan court." Whether before or after that message reached him, Tanucci did in fact appoint Galiani a Counsellor of the Neapolitan Supreme Court of Commerce, the office that would be mentioned in the letter of recall. But he ignored the import of Choiseul's words, and finally acquiesced in Galiani's insistent requests to be returned to Paris. It was then that Choiseul began to seek an opportunity to expel him.

Of this Galiani seems to have been happily unaware. "I must do this justice to the Parisians," he wrote to Tanucci on his return, "—that they have welcomed me back with such loving kindness as to make me realize how much more loved I am in Paris—to speak generally—than in Naples. For so much love I can forgive the eternal fogs of this climate, and the lack of appetite, the nervous tension and headaches, from which I suffer here. To be loved is the greatest happiness in life."

Denis Diderot, a reluctant atheist—"Take away a Christian's fear of hell," he once said, "and you take away his faith"—had become friendly with Galiani soon after the abbé's arrival in Paris. On Diderot's part there had been an early moment of hesitation, not due to theological differences. "Like you, I am in a bad mood," he wrote to Sophie Volland, during a house party given by Mme d'Epinay at her Château de La Chevrette. "The abbé Galiani has just arrived. His stories don't amuse me as they used to. . . . He displeased me greatly by confessing that he had never wept in his life, that the loss of his father, his brothers, his sisters and his mistresses had never cost him a tear." (The abbé liked to tease. He had indeed lost his father, but his only brother and his five sisters were alive and well in Naples. Nothing is known of his Italian mistresses.) Along with his formidable intelligence and imagination, the warm-hearted Diderot was celebrated for an engaging naïveté and for *la larme facile*; and he must have wondered whether friendship would be possible with such a monster of insensitivity.

However, only ten days later he wrote differently to Mlle Volland about his miniature fellow guest: "The abbé is endlessly clever and amusing, a treasure on rainy days. I told Mme d'Epinay that if the people who carve chessmen were to make some pieces looking like him, everybody would buy one to take home." And soon thereafter, following the departure of an unpleasant visitor from Mme d'Epinay's apartment in Paris, ". . . in came the abbé Galiani, and with him gaiety, imagination, wit, nonsense, merriment and everything that makes one forget life's displeasures.

The two men saw each other frequently. In another letter to Mme Volland, Diderot tells of walking with the abbé in the gardens of La

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Chevrette, where a few days earlier Galiani had teased Mme d'Epinay's swans and been made to flee. "Now the swans hate the abbé. As soon as they see him, even at a distance, they flap their wings, rush toward him, their necks outstretched, their beaks half-open, squawking: he doesn't dare go anywhere near them." (One pictures the little Neapolitan running from them on his short legs.) "A propos of the inimitable abbé," Diderot wrote in another letter to Mme Volland, "some time ago he delivered himself of an apology for Tiberius and Nero. Yesterday he did the same for Caligula. He claims that Tacitus and Suetonius were a sorry pair who stuffed their works with the gossip of the market-place. I much prefer fun like that, which reveals genius, intelligence, the mind of a scholar, to flat, disgusting drivel about J.C. and his apostles." (Although no believer, Diderot was bored by the atheistic chatter of the day.) In one of his later letters to Mme d'Epinay, from Naples, Galiani was to write of the days at La Chevrette when "my wig was always in the air and my cheeks on fire." His meaning becomes clear when we read in the memoirs of the abbé Morellet that "after dinner and coffee the abbé would sit in an armchair, cross-legged like a tailor; and because of the heat of the fire he would hold his wig in one hand while gesticulating with the other." And Diderot, writing years later to Galiani in Naples about certain verses of Horace: "I would much rather be speaking with you of these things than writing. I think how we used to talk beside the fire, you with your wig off, your head steaming; how you would take up a subject, pursue it, delve into it, casting light, as you went, into the most obscure corners of literature, antiquity, politics, philosophy and morals."

The passion for general enlightenment that had carried Diderot through the long labor of the *Encyclopédie* was expressed in a characteristic "Note to the reader" printed at the head of one of the volumes. In it he expressed the hope that "the education of the public [may] advance at so rapid a pace that twenty years from now scarcely one in a thousand of our pages will be remote from common knowledge." It was that perennial passion of Diderot's for extension of knowledge—knowledge as an aid to judgment—that engendered the abbé Galiani's most celebrated work, his *Dialogues on the Grain Trade.*

The genesis of the abbé's book is revealed in two letters from Diderot to Mme Volland written in November 1768. In them Diderot records two conversations with the abbé on that matter with which all Europe was concerned and with which Galiani had himself become familiar during and after the Naples famine of 1764: the supplying and storage of grain. (Their talk may have been kindled by food riots that were then taking place in Normandy and Brittany. There had been recent famines in Rome and Tuscany, and in Madrid.) Diderot reports the second conversation as follows:

> Finally the abbé Galiani explained himself clearly. If anything is demonstrable in public policy, it is this: that [free] exportation [of grain] is madness. I swear to you that no one, until now, has spoken a sensible word on this subject. I begged him, on bended knee, to publish his ideas.
>
> Here is but one of his principles:
>
> "What do you mean, to sell grain?"
>
> "It means exchanging it for money."
>
> "You don't know what you're talking about: it means exchanging grain for grain. At the present time can you ever advantageously exchange the grain you have for grain that people will sell you?"
>
> He showed us all the implications of that law: they are immense. He explained the cause of the present high prices, and made us see what no one has ever suspected. Never in my life have I listened to him with such pleasure.

Diderot did not bend his knee in vain. The abbé, prolific writer in his youth, had during his years of enjoying Paris written little except his regular reports to Tanucci. Now, despite earlier laments that a thousand books already existed about grain supply, he found himself fired to write his own; and in the few months between Diderot's exhortation and his own sudden expulsion from France, he wrote the eight chapters that compose his *Dialogues sur le Commerce des Blés.* It is a work at once instructive, admonitory, and attractive, narrative and sermon, Socratic in form—a series of conversations between Galiani himself (the Italian "Chevalier de Zanobi" in the text) and his foil, the French "Marquis de Roquemaur" (in part a portrait of a Parisian friend, the Marquis de Croixmare). The first dialogue sets the scene and plunges immediately into the matter:

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16 November 1768: chez Madame. . . . after dinner.

The Marquis

I am absolutely delighted to see you back, my dear Chevalier. How long you have been away! And where have you been during the four years since we last saw each other?

The Chevalier

I have been traveling. I spent the years '64 and '65 in my country. From there I made a tour of Germany, Holland and England. And now for almost a year I have been here in Paris again.

The Marquis

For a long time to come?

The Chevalier

I very much hope so.

The Marquis

Did you have a pleasant time in Italy?

The Chevalier

No.

The Marquis

"Leave Paris and life stops," as the saying goes. Your native land had lost its charm for you?

The Chevalier

It wasn't that, but I had chosen a bad time to go back. In Rome there were bad food shortages. The news from Tuscany, and especially from Naples, increased the horror of the situation. In Naples it was no mere matter of shortages. There was a cruel, terrible famine. Thousands of miserable, starving people were eating grass and dying of hunger, and then an epidemic broke out and finished off the rest.

The Marquis

It must have been frightful. I see you are still moved by the memory. To what do you attribute such a famine?

The Chevalier

To human error.

And it is human error—including the hoarding of grain by profiteers, the lack of control over exports, and the fraudulent shipment of damaged foodstuffs in those days of slow transport, all of them vivid in Galiani's mind since his months in Naples in 1775–76 and repeatedly deplored in his letters to Tanucci—that the *Dialogues* proceed to chronicle and analyze. It is for these mistakes that remedies are proposed. Despite the grim subject, the tone is generally light—the "physiocrats" or "economists" (the dogmatic free traders of the day, opposed to interference with "natural law") did not fail to deplore its "frivolity"—but the lightness is of the Socratic kind. For a summary, we may turn to Fausto Nicolini:

Galiani maintains that economic questions, unlike philosophical ones, can be resolved in a hundred diverse ways, according to the different contingencies of time and place; and that therefore unlimited trade in grain, advantageous in such and such a country in such and such a year, can become harmful in the same country in a different year, and in fact, in the same year in a different country. This thesis is recognized as unobjectionable today, but the physiocrats deplored it as anti-libertarian.

Or, as Diderot put it: "The Economists advance general principles with the most marvelous intrepidity. But not a single one of these is immune from an infinity of exceptions in practise."

Such was the nature of the manuscript that Galiani confided to Diderot and to Mme d'Epinay at the moment of his abrupt recall from Paris.

Throughout the two centuries since their first appearance, Galiani's *Dialogues* have enjoyed international fame.

Before the first printing, Diderot and Mme d'Epinay gave the manuscript their close attention. (Mme d'Epinay was herself a writer—author of books about the education of children, and of an unpublished autobiographical novel.) They corrected some of the absent Galiani's Italianate French, removed jokes they thought excessive, and dealt with passages that might be questioned by the censor. In this last task they were surreptitiously helped by Antoine-Raymond de Sartine, lieutenant-general of the Paris police, Mme d'Epinay's friend and country neighbor, who admired Galiani. They all knew that the censor's office was being badgered by hostile free traders in high places who had got wind of the *Dialogues* and hoped for their suppression.

Meanwhile, the abbé had not gone directly to Naples, but was lingering—to the bewilderment of his friends—in Genoa, close to the French border. There, silently and all but secretly, he was cherishing the illusion that Choiseul, if properly approached, could be induced to relent and request his return. But in early autumn he learned the worst: Dr. Gatti, who was at once his confidential spokesman in Paris and Choiseul's physician, wrote him that there was no hope. After repeatedly putting Gatti off, the minister had finally allowed him to present Galiani's petition; and with no hesitation whatever had

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given a reply that was brief and brutal: "Monsieur l'abbé Galiani is very witty, but he is not quite straight, and I do not think he is good for state affairs." And when Gatti persisted, reminding Choiseul of Galiani's love of France, and especially of Paris—"the café of Europe," Galiani had called the spirited city—Choiseul was unmoved. The abbé's offense was unforgivable: the leaking of a state secret to the ambassador of an unfriendly foreign power was the supreme diplomatic crime. And Choiseul closed the conversation by quoting a drastic French saying about what had happened to a man who had talked too much. "Il s'est noyé dans son crachat"—"He drowned in his own spittle." No message could have been clearer: for Choiseul, the abbé was a castaway.

All hope gone, Galiani left Genoa, visited friends in Rome, and in a letter headed "Naples, 18 November [1770]," he wrote to Mme d'Epinay: "As you see, my travels have ended. I have been graciously received by the King, and that is all I can tell you. I would be lying were I to say what I expect to do in the spring. I shall certainly spend the winter in Naples."

Indeed: in Naples the abbé would spend not only the winter, but the rest of his life. There, in the city that he had found, and now again found, invincibly dull after Paris, two things sustained him: news of the Parisian publication, and rapid international renown, of the *Dialogues*, and his correspondence with Mme d'Epinay, which, having begun as editorial discussion of the preparation and publication of his book, evolved into a constant exchange of Parisian and Neapolitan news, at once gossipy and philosophical, that would end only with Mme d'Epinay's death in 1783.

The rest of the story can be briefly told.

"I have finally received the book that is causing such an uproar in Paris, and have read it with the greatest avidity, having forgotten almost everything in it. *Foi de connaisseur*, it's a good book!" he wrote to Mme d'Epinay on February 3, 1770; and throughout his correspondence with her—and in letters to Diderot, Grimm, and other Parisian friends—he would discuss his book and the issues it raised, elaborating and refining his ideas. He was particularly delighted by praise from Voltaire: "It is as though Plato and Molière had joined forces to compose this work." However, at first cheered by the applause, Galiani came to find it maddening. *Pezzo grosso* though he became in Naples—Tanucci had promoted him to the rank of Secretary of the Supreme Court of Commerce, and he later achieved still higher positions—he found it unbearable to be far from Paris when his book was being read by all. "I have no relief from the boredom that is crushing me except when I have letters from Paris"; "Oh, if I could have a sip of the water of Lethe! They say the spring lies close to Paris: if only you could send me a few bottles!" Galiani's nostalgia for Paris was unassuageable.

Apart from his famous *Dialogues* and his share of the Galiani–d'Epinay correspondence (one of the most spirited epistolary exchanges of the eighteenth century), his best-known work, written in collaboration with the Neapolitan playwright the abbé Giovanni-Battista Lorenzi, is his comedy, *Socrate Immaginario*—"The Man Who Imagined He Was Socrates"—which was set to music by Paisiello, and is still performed. (In 1835 the poet Giacomo Leopardi attended a performance in Naples. Of this occasion his friend Antonio Ranieri was later to write: "I still see him, leaning his right elbow on the edge of the box, shielding his eyes from the glare and . . . enjoying the celebrated *Socrate Immaginario* of the abate Galiani, set to music by Paisiello and sung by Lablache, with its famous chorus, truly Aristophanean.") Galiani also compiled a dictionary of the Neapolitan dialect, drew up plans for the restoration of the antique Roman harbor of Baia and for the drainage of nearby swamps, and superintended the preparation of the first accurate map of the kingdom of Naples.

Mme d'Epinay's death came three months after the French Academy had awarded her, in January 1783, a prize for her best-known work, *Les Conversations d'Emilie*, a charming account of the education of her granddaughter. On learning that she had died, Galiani wrote to a Parisian friend, "Madame d'Epinay n'est plus! j'ai donc aussi cessé d'être!" He himself was indeed not well, and the few years that remained to him were difficult. Learning, toward the end, of his declining health, Queen Maria Carolina of Naples wrote to him, thanking him for his services to the state and promising to "look after his rela-

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tives." He died, aged fifty-nine, on October 30, 1787, without ever having revisited Paris.

It might be said of Galiani, and of Mme d'Epinay, too, that they died "just in time"—for, soon after their disappearance, their worlds crumbled utterly. In August 1789, a few weeks following the fall of the Bastille, Mme d'Epinay's grandson, Henri de Belsunce, an infantry officer in the élite royal Régiment de Bourbon, was shot and stoned to death at Caen by a mob of "republicans," who tore out his heart and ate it. In Naples, the so-called Parthenopean Republic, nobly conceived by bourgeois and intellectuals in January 1799, and temporarily supported by French republican troops, lasted barely six months. Reprisals by the re-established monarchy were so savage as to cripple Neapolitan intellectual life for generations. Among the Neapolitan republicans arrested and sentenced to death was Galiani's great-nephew, Vincenzo Galiani, a medical student. His distraught parents appealed to the queen—the queen who had promised the abbé to look after his family. But Maria Carolina was a sister of Marie Antoinette. Young Galiani's parents were granted no audience, and the hanging took place as ordained.

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Emma Herwegh

GORDON A. CRAIG

In May 1893, the young Frank Wedekind wrote to his mother from Paris, "I live here now in the closest contact with old Frau Herwegh, to whom I owe thanks for just about everything that I have learned about, and enjoyed in, Paris society. She has introduced me not only to people like Sarasate but to a multitude of countesses and marquesses. She is interested in everything. She is just as young as she is old, just as poor as she is respected and, indeed, influential."

Wedekind's new friend was the widow of Georg Herwegh, the radical poet of the 1840s, and in the Paris of that now-distant time she had known and frequently consorted with Heine, Marx, and Mazzini. The historical association must have fascinated Wedekind, who had already begun his own assault upon the bourgeois order with his drama *Spring's Awakening* and was now hard at work on the Lulu tragedies *Earth Spirit* and *Pandora's Box*. He seems to have found in Emma Herwegh a kindred spirit and a source of inspiration. Nor was he the first rebel against society to feel this way. Mikhail Bakunin and Felice Orsini, Francesco De Sanctis, and Vittorio Imbriani, Wilhelm Rüstow, and Ferdinand Lassalle had all regarded her as a friend and an ally, and the novelist Gottfried Keller, who had known her in Zürich in the 1950s, noted, not without amusement, that "all our spiritual *Eisenfresser* (swashbucklers) and Brutuses swear by her."

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I

Born in 1817, Emma Herwegh was the youngest daughter of the Berlin silk merchant and court purveyor Johann Gottfried Siegmund, an assimilated Jew of Protestant observance. Siegmund was liberal in politics and had a strong interest in cultural activities. He paid careful attention to the education of his children, and Emma received instruction in painting and drawing from Professor Holberg, the Director of the Berlin Academy; in piano from Ludwig Bayer, one of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy's teachers; and in history from the liberal scholar and politician Max Duncker, in addition to a thorough acquaintance with the German classics and extensive training in modern languages. It is possible, however, that her formal education was no more important than the informal one that she acquired from the company she met in her home, which was always open to foreign visitors, particularly to French businessmen and writers, students from Switzerland (including, on at least one occasion, the young Jakob Burckhardt, who had come to Berlin in 1839 to study with Leopold von Ranke), and a not inconsiderable number of Polish intellectuals, as well as such local artists as the actresses Klara Stich and Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer. Her conversations with such people protected her against parochialism, and the diary that she began to keep in 1839 reveals the development of a critical attitude in politics that was not usual in one of her sex and years.

Perhaps her admiration for Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, whose "energy, creative spirit, and depth of intellectual comprehension" she praised in one of her diary's early entries made her skeptical of the great expectations

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held by the liberal community when Frederick William IV ascended the throne of Prussia in 1840. On October 18, when the ceremony of homage took place in Berlin, she and a friend had seats on the platform, but the king's spread-eagle oratory and his call for the audience to join him in a sacred oath to "maintain Prussia as it is . . . and as it must remain if it is not to perish," elicited from her only the diary notation, "Boredom above all!" Like others of her generation, she was more interested in the unachieved German nation than in Prussian particularism. And, by extension, her sympathies went out to peoples who combined national self-determination with freedom, like the Swiss, of whom she had a somewhat idealized conception, and to others, like the Poles, whose aspirations for freedom and nationhood were blocked by the reactionary powers Prussia, Russia, and Austria. In September 1842, after a friend had taken her target shooting, she wrote that she had been in good form and that "if the Russian government, complete with Nicholas, had stood before her target, then, *piff paff!*, and those types would have been blown up and the white Lithuanian eagle would be soaring high in the air."

Emma Herwegh's diary is rich in entries that make it clear that she was often lonely and frustrated by the realization that she possessed powers that were unfulfilled and that she longed for an opportunity to escape from what she once called her "useless, destructive apathy." She sought relief from these moods in violent exercise ("Friday I mounted my horse and rode more madly than ever, for I had a lot to ride out of me"), in Schleiermacher's views about religion, and in poetry. It was in the last of these—poetry—that she found her escape, for she came upon Georg Herwegh. In October 1841 Herwegh's *Poems of One Who Is Alive* fell into her hands, and she was soon writing of her gratitude to "the noble German singer" whose "brazen songs like a solemn organ chord had sung Sunday into [her] heart." Stirred and exhilarated by strophes like

> Give us the man who will
> seize
> The Banner of the new age,
> And through Europe we will
> break
> A road to freedom,
>
> [Gib uns den Mann, der den
> Panier
> Der neuen Zeit erfasse,
> Und durch Europa brechen
> wir
> Der Freiheit eine Gasse,]

Emma stopped reading Schleiermacher and began to study histories of the French Revolution. She was soon a confirmed republican with an avid interest in the possibilities of radical change. In the summer of 1842, after a discussion of these subjects at the home of Max and Lina Duncker, she resolved to write to Herwegh about her views and perplexities.

The poet was beginning that extraordinary tour of Germany in which he was hailed as a conquering hero from one end of the land to the other, and in November he was in Berlin to see the king. That visit, in which Herwegh played a rather too insistent Posa to Frederick William's Philip, ended badly, indeed, with Herwegh's permanent expulsion from Prussian territory. But before that happened, he had visited Emma Siegmund, and a week had hardly passed before they were engaged to be married. For the impecunious Herwegh, whose trip to Germany was designed in part to seek money for the founding of a new journal, it was a good match; but there is no reason to doubt that he was impressed by Emma's intelligence, charm, and spirit and was sincere when he told his friends that she could "give us all worthy lectures on the subject of freedom." As for Emma, she was deliriously happy. "So *free* a man I have *never* seen," she wrote, "let alone one untouched by any trace of egoism, regarding himself only as a tool for the execution of a great idea!" "Now, heart," she added in self-admonishment,

> show that you can love
> And have no care, whatever your destiny,
> And whether it lead to heaven or to hell.

The couple was married in March 1843. There were preliminary difficulties. Herwegh, who had fled to Switzerland in 1840 to escape military service in Württemberg, returned to Zürich after the ignominious end of his German tour and applied for the right of permanent residence. Largely at the insistence of J. C. Bluntschli, the conservative government that had taken power in September 1839 refused the request because of Her-

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wegh's association with people like Bakunin and the communist Weitling and gave him four days to leave the canton. If this was an omen, it did not daunt Herwegh's bride. Bakunin, who had met her in Leipzig in 1842 and liked her immediately, wrote to her in February that her future existence was in all probability not going to be tranquil, but that tranquillity was the worst misfortune that could befall one. "L'amour réuni à une large et continuelle action," he continued, "voilá le seul et unique vertu, car tout le reste n'est que néant et mensonge." Emma entirely agreed.

Despite the momentary hitch, the marriage was formalized in Baden in the canton of Aargau, and the couple then moved, by easy stages, to Paris. Here they had an extensive circle of acquaintances that included such artists as Hugo, Béranger, Turgenev, and Heine but was largely dominated by representatives of the radical left in politics. After Herwegh's German trip, he had at least temporarily lost his faith in the possibility of a liberal revolution and considered himself, and was considered by others (even for a time by Karl Marx), to be a communist. He saw his poetic function now as one of arousing the masses to a violent protest against their condition; Emma was enthusiastic about the new emphasis. "If the impression [made by a poem] remains only an impression," she had written to Herwegh on the eve of their wedding, "then the devil take all literature! . . . Only from the masses of the proletariat can we now expect an Easter." She probably felt this more strongly than her husband, whose communism did not in fact run very deep. He was becoming used to the commodious apartment in the rue Barbet, where his wife's wealth allowed him to live in idle luxury. When the second volume of his poems fell stillborn from the presses, he became disenchanted with both poetry and politics and absorbed himself in dilettantish studies of biology and natural philosophy.

His wife refused to believe that this development was more than a temporary aberration. In October and November of 1847, when she returned to Berlin for a visit and saw the Dunckers and other old liberal friends, she wrote to Herwegh that none of them had any comprehension of, or desire for, the freedom for which he was striving, that they had "not a spark of the holy flame," but were "philistines, egoists, old women with and without trousers, and yet I do not know what I would not give to see you among them for one day—but on a tribune in the public square." During Emma's visit, Berlin was engrossed in the question of the future fate of Ludwik Mieroslawski and other Polish patriots who had, a year earlier, planned a national rising in Posen but been betrayed, arrested, and imprisoned in Moabit and now had death sentences hanging over them. This was a cause that greatly touched Emma Herwegh, and with that mixture of effrontery and charm that always characterized her, she went to the prison and persuaded its director to let her see and talk with the prisoners, even though such visits were strictly forbidden. This gesture may have brought some psychological comfort to the Poles—Mieroslawski declared, "Que je suis content de vous voir, Madame, laissez vous regarder, il y a un an que je n'ai vu une femme"—but it did not bring any material alleviation of their fate. That had to wait upon the March events of 1848. Even so, it is clear that Emma regarded her action as a necessary one, a demonstration, as she said in a different context, that "I am your wife," and it is significant that before leaving Berlin she presented a copy of Herwegh's poems to the prison director.

Her faith in her husband's basic political instincts was more than justified in the spring of 1848. As thrones began to topple in Germany, he became president of a new German Democratic Society in Paris. He negotiated with the revolutionary government of France for financial and military support, and set off as the head of a hastily improvised legion of ex-soldiers, professional revolutionaries, and German, French, and Polish volunteers to carry the message of freedom and the republic across the Rhine. He did not go alone, for, in Heine's words,

> Beside him rode an amazon
> The wife with the long nose,
> With a saucy feather in her
> hat,
> And ecstasy shining in her eyes.
>
> [Als Amazone ritt neben ihm
> Die Gattin mit der langen Nase;
> Sie trug auf dem Hut eine kecke
> Feder,
> Im schönem Auge blitzte Ekstase.]

Emma was eager now, as she had written in one of her letters to her husband, "to show

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what two people can do who are sworn to the same flag: that no human strength is too puny to set the great wheel rolling, and the movement has giant strength, or arouses giant strength in women too."

This ill-starred adventure was not as harebrained as conservative opinion made it out to be after its collapse. Herwegh was not, to be sure, the ideal leader for such an enterprise: the power of his rhetoric was greater than his attention to detail, and his despotic nature could not tolerate criticism. But no one could fault his courage and, if he failed in the end, this was due less to his own deficiencies than it was to inadequate support from the French, particularly with respect to guns and ammunition, to petty jealousies and professional incompetence on the part of his military commanders (only one of whom, the former Prussian lieutenant Corvin-Wiersbitzki, showed either energy or initiative), and to the curious disinclination of the German revolutionaries on the other side of the Rhine to accept the Paris legion as an ally.

There is no doubt that Herwegh's columns might have made a positive contribution to the revolutionary cause if they had effected a timely junction with the republican columns of Friedrich Hecker, Gustav Struve, and Franz Sigel in southern Baden. This was prevented by Hecker's reluctance to alienate local opinion by inviting into Germany the French anarchists who, he had been told, constituted the bulk of Herwegh's forces. With a complete indifference to the risks involved, Emma Herwegh made two trips into Baden in an attempt to coordinate plans with Hecker, first traveling by train and post to Mannheim, Basel, and Schaffhausen, before finding him in the neighborhood of Donaueschingen, where Hecker gave Emma vague assurances that he would send information about a juncture of their forces soon; and then again, four days later, when she tracked him down in Kandern and worked out a rather imprecise plan for Herwegh's legion to cross the Rhine at Grosskembs and join Hecker's forces in a joint drive on Freiburg. Jubilantly, Emma carried this news back to Strassburg, and the legion moved out. By the time that it had crossed the river, however, Hecker's forces had been surprised and defeated at Kandern, and the troops led by Struve and Sigel were being decisively repulsed before Freiburg. Herwegh's tiny army had no alternative now but to try to avoid battle until it could cross the Rhine again and take refuge in Switzerland. This, under Corvin's leadership, it had almost succeeded in doing, when it was cut off at Niederdossenbach by a superior force of Württemberg infantry.

About this short encounter there were many malicious legends, most of them telling of Herwegh's cowardice under fire and his wife's efforts to protect him at the risk of her own life. Corvin, who was in a position to know, would have none of these. During the legion's retreat, he had learned to admire Emma's courage, watching her "endure the unaccustomed exertions without grumbling, bravely facing the danger, of which she was fully conscious." Much of the time, she and her husband traveled by carriage, and it was behind the dashboard of this that Herwegh was supposed to have crept when the shooting started at Niederdossenbach, while his wife sought to shield him with her body. In reality, the carriage had no dashboard, and the Herweghs worked feverishly during the fight to make new cartridges for a legion that had shrunk to less than five hundred men and had only two hundred and fifty guns, only half of which fired efficiently, and had fewer than four cartridges per gun.

The fight did not last long. Despite courageous resistance, and a gallant but costly flanking movement by the former Prussian Lieutenant Reinhard von Schimmelpfennig's *Sensenmänner*, a detachment armed only with scythes mounted on pikes, the legion was forced to fly in disorder, its members making their escape as best they could. The Württembergers were intent above all on capturing "Herwegh and his accursed wife," against whom there was an extraordinary local animus. If one judges from the brutal treatment accorded other legionnaires who were apprehended, they would, if caught, have been summarily executed. But the Herweghs found refuge in a farmer's cottage, where they donned the clothes of agricultural workers. Herwegh shaved off his beard, and after some close calls, they managed to cross the Rheinfelden Bridge into Switzerland by mingling with crowds who were going to market.

II

Despite the derision of Herwegh's enemies, the adventure had been an honorable

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one, dedicated to a noble cause and carried out at grave personal risk. There is little doubt that Emma Herwegh regarded it later as the high point of her marriage. It was a pity that it was followed so quickly by what was without doubt its lowest. When the couple returned to Paris, they found themselves forced to make unpleasant changes in their manner of life. Johann Gottfried Siegmund had been investing for some time in building property in the west end of Berlin. The upheaval of 1848 caused a precipitous fall in values, and he fared so badly in consequence that he was forced to reduce his support for his daughter to little more than subsistence. The luxurious trappings of the Paris apartment had to be sold, which further depressed Herwegh's spirits, already lacerated by the defeat in Baden. He began to spend his evenings in the comfortable flat of the Russian writer in exile Alexander Herzen, near the Madeleine, leaving Emma at home. The two men became fast friends, but so did Herwegh and Herzen's wife Natalie, a neurotically romantic woman who felt a strong compulsion to relieve the poet's melancholy. Fearing police surveillance, Herzen in June 1849 took his wife to Geneva; Herwegh followed, again leaving Emma behind, and by September, Natalie and he were lovers.

The course of the affair, which dragged on for two and a half years and ended badly, with Natalie dead and Herzen and Herwegh slanging each other in print, is described in E. H. Carr's *The Romantic Exiles*, with an admirable psychological insight into Herzen's remarkable myopia, Herwegh's self-indulgence, and Natalie Herzen's ability to convince herself that she was only doing what George Sand's heroines were admired for doing. Carr's sympathy is reserved for Emma Herwegh, who knew of the affair long before Herzen did, but tolerated it because she was confident that her husband's dependence upon her would not permit it to last indefinitely. At the cost of much personal humiliation, she was in the end proved to be right. Carr is correct in writing that Emma's "infinite patience, toleration and self-effacement" deserve "more than the cold contempt which Herzen pours on her in *My Past and Thoughts*."

During the last part of 1851 and the first half of 1852, while Herwegh was in Zürich, alternately drafting hysterical letters to his wife and Herzen and introducing the works of Schopenhauer to Richard Wagner, Emma and the children were in Nice, living near the Herzens but no longer in intimate communication with either of them. Emma's closest friends in this unhappy period of her life were professional revolutionaries of one stripe or another, particularly the German naturalist Karl Vogt, a Pole named Chojecki, who was generally called Charles Edmond, and the Italian *carbonaro* Felice Orsini. A veteran of the lost battle for the Roman Republic, Orsini was now an agent for Mazzini's Central Committee for European Democracy, although, until such time as his chief had devised new plans for insurrection, he was pretending to be engaged in the manufacture of hemp. He admired Emma's unquenchable revolutionary spirit and was amused by her romantic extravagance, both traits that were seriously lacking in his own wife Assunta, who hated politics and longed for a life of bourgeois conformity.

Orsini and Emma had long talks together about lost battles and future hopes, talks that gained in intimacy because of Emma's fluency in Orsini's native tongue and her ready sympathy for the cause of Italian freedom. But there is no convincing evidence that their pleasure in each other's company ripened into a *Liebesverhältnis*, as the catalog of the Herwegh Museum in Liestal states. Emma was too devoted to her husband to think of imitating his behavior. In the summer of 1852, when the Herwegh-Herzen affair had become a European cause célèbre, Orsini begged Emma to abandon "that brigand George," Karl Vogt urged her to go back to her parents in Berlin, and Charles Edmond invited her to divorce Herwegh and marry him. She refused all three suggestions with indignation, gathered up her children and belongings, and rejoined her husband in Zürich.

III

Their reconciliation was not difficult. Emma was ready to forget the affair with Natalie, and Herwegh was happy to be able to rely once more upon her encouragement and guidance, for he was, in these years, more and more a man of vast and unfocused projects and of failing energy. Emma never relinquished the hope that she could bring him back to political activity. To the extent that her own

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strong personality was a magnet, drawing like-minded people to their home, she succeeded. With the friends Herwegh had made during their separation, she was cordial without being intimate. Wagner, his closest crony, she did not like, and once explained her antipathy by calling him an "égoiste sans coeur qui se démine comme une femme hystérique," apparently not realizing that she was unconsciously describing her own husband. She had a great facility for keeping the composer off balance—when he asked her once whether they were not intimate friends, she answered, "Dites des ennemis intimes, ce sera plus exact"—and for pricking his inflated self-esteem. During the visit of Franz Liszt and Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein to Zürich in 1853, Wagner was chagrined to discover that Emma Herwegh was the person that the princess wished to see and that Liszt was visibly touched by Emma's recollection of a concert of his that she had heard in Hamburg in 1841. After the illustrious pair had left, the princess sent Emma a medallion bearing Liszt's image, and the two women carried on a lively correspondence for some years.

Emma took greater pleasure in her acquaintance with the physiologist Jacob Moleschott, with Gottfried Keller, and, after he came to Zürich in 1855, with the architect Gottfried Semper. But it was with the group that she fondly called "my Italians" that she, and often Herwegh as well, sat up till two o'clock in the morning, talking about the state of European politics. These discussions were contentious in the extreme, for while several members of the group, like Pietro Cironi, were ardent Mazzinians, Filippo De Boni, who had served as the short-lived Roman Republic's envoy to Bern in 1849, was at heart a follower of Gioberti and was savagely referred to by the anti-clerical Vittorio Imbriani as Emma's *prete spretato* (defrocked priest). Imbriani, whom one historian has called a "tempestuous D'Artagnan," was a notorious duelist, with indeterminate political views, which allowed him to be contemptuous of almost everyone in the group, except Emma. Francesco De Sanctis had been on the barricades in Naples in 1848, but his republicanism was tempered by a certain respect for the royal house of Piedmont, which put him at odds with De Boni, who had a bitter hatred for the Piedmontese.

What prevented the group from flying into fragments was the personality of Emma Herwegh, whose power over these desperadoes Gottfried Keller found both amusing and impressive. Imbriani frankly adored her and continued corresponding with her until 1877, although by that time he had become a hypochondriacal ultra, whereas her political stance never changed. Affection for her must also have played a part in the offer of a professorship in the University of Naples that De Sanctis, when he was minister of education, made to Herwegh in 1861, an opportunity that came to nothing when the government fell from office and the ministerial portfolios were changed.

Symptomatic of Emma's growing enthusiasm for Italy (but also, no doubt, of her vulnerability to the local culture's zeal for self-improvement) was her decision, shortly after her arrival in Zürich, to form a group that would read the Italian classics in the original. She recruited Jacob Moleschott and his wife and Semper's daughter Lisbeth, taught them the language, "surrendering herself," as Moleschott later wrote, "to its rebirth in freedom with emotion and willingness to sacrifice." Then she led them through the *Inferno* and *I Promessi Sposi* and Petrarch and Tasso. The group practiced the language on its walks through the markets, which must have added to the gaiety of the Zürich scene.

All of this Italianity made it appropriate, if not inevitable, that Felice Orsini should come back into Emma's life. In truth, he had never entirely disappeared from it. In August 1853, when he had been commissioned by Mazzini to be the commander-in-chief of a national insurrection in central Italy, he wrote and asked her to send him some manifestos in German that might shake the loyalty of Austrian garrisons in Modena. He never got a chance to use these, for he and the pitifully small number of recruits who responded to his call were arrested by Piedmontese troops before they had begun their march. As a result he was expelled from the country and put on a ship for England. From London he sent Emma doleful letters filled with worries about his wife Assunta, comments on the coldness and lack of education of English women, and laments that he was doing nothing for his country, until suddenly, in June 1854, he wrote jubilantly, "Read this and speak to no one! I go now to my fate!" In fact, he was

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simply embarking upon another of Mazzini's forlorn enterprises, which this time led him, under the name of Tito Celsi, to a series of ill-planned landings on Italian beaches, much scrambling on mountain paths to meetings that were betrayed, several close calls with government troops, and finally a desperate escape through the Grison Alps, which brought him on the last day of August to Emma Herwegh in Zürich.

Orsini was by this time pretty fed up with Mazzini. In the three weeks of concealment in the Herwegh home, he debated whether he should not enlist in the Russian army, which was now fighting in the Crimea, or any other force (except the Piedmontese or the French) that would give him a chance to fight as a regimental officer and command regular troops with a defined objective. Emma talked him out of this piece of self-indulgence. Pietro Cironi, who, according to Michael St. John Packe, had fallen in love with Emma and wanted to get rid of Orsini, suggested that he go to Milan and discover what was left of the revolutionary organization there. This prospect was dangerous enough to appeal to Orsini's quixotic temperament, and he set forth, carrying an old passport of Herwegh's that Emma, who had been struck by Orsini's likeness to the photograph in it, had altered in such a way as to describe the bearer as Giorgio Hernagh, Swiss watchmaker. It was not, unfortunately, to protect him for long. The chief result of his activities, in Milan and later in Vienna, was to alert police spies and informers. Oblivious to this, Orsini spent a good deal of time in cafés, writing a series of letters to Emma, signed Dr. De Balossis, in which he talked about the importance of his mission, his continued concern for his family, and his gratitude for Emma's support. "As for the friendship between us," he wrote on November 8, 1854, "it appeared truer, on my side also, in Zürich than it had been even in Nice. There my mind was inflamed by my imagination. Now it is my heart that I listen to, without passion and without exaggeration, and it speaks to me only of true friendship, of true esteem, and I feel that for you." It was a friendship that was now to be exposed to considerable strain. In mid-December, having happily traveled from Vienna to Budapest and then into Transylvania, Orsini was arrested at an inn in Hermannstadt, sent to Vienna for interrogation, and, his attempts to obscure the truth proving fruitless, charged with high treason and imprisoned in the fortress of Mantua.

Knowing that there was a good chance that, sooner or later, execution awaited him, Orsini began immediately to think of the possibility of escape. He applied to the prison governor for permission to write to Emma Herwegh, claiming that he was without money for food and tobacco and that she, as the godmother of his daughter, was his only relative, his wife having separated from him. The fact that this request was granted, after a superficial checking of church records in Nice, and the further fact that the name Herwegh aroused no sense of recognition and its similarity to the name Hernagh no suspicion, do not speak well for the Austrian police system. Within two months, Emma Herwegh received three letters from Mantua that were puzzling in their triviality, until her husband realized that there was invisible writing in lemon juice between the lines. From that time on until March of the following year, she was the recipient of a stream of requests for money, details about Orsini's arrest, descriptions of the internal arrangements of the fortress of San Giorgio, messages for Mazzini, and plans for escape.

She must have enjoyed herself hugely during these months, feeling her hand once more on the great wheel of history. To be sure, Orsini was a demanding correspondent. Not only did he request a good deal of money, which had to be assembled from various revolutionary committees and groups, but he had bizarre ideas concerning the materials needed to facilitate his liberation. For a time he was convinced that the best method would be to drug all of the guards with opium, and he asked that a great coat be sent to him with the drug concealed in its buttons. In London, Mazzini had such a paletot made and, when it failed to arrive, Emma procured another in Zürich and prepared the buttons herself. But when the escape was tried at a Twelfth Night party in the prison that was attended by all the turnkeys and soldiers of the guard, the drug had little effect. In the end, Orsini fell back on literature, more precisely on the works of the French physicist and astronomer Dominique François Arago. After his request for them had been approved by the prison authorities, Emma dispatched these books to him, along with invoices from Zürich booksellers, but

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with metal saws concealed in their bindings. With these saws Orsini laboriously severed the bars in his cell windows and, at two o'clock on the morning of March 30, 1856, after many anguished delays, lowered himself down the prison wall. He fell heavily into the moat, injuring his leg, and then, by a series of happy accidents, was extricated by friendly strangers and spirited off to a nearby village, where friends came and carried him out of Austrian territory. On April 11, Emma received a message reading, "Carissima Emma. Sono libero da 12 giorni da 2 in luogo non austriaca," and a week later he was concealed once more in her house in Zürich.

It was the last time. Orsini now really did go to his fate, and in circumstances beyond any help that Emma Herwegh could give him. On May 21, he left Zürich for London, where he was soon involved in the preparations for the *attentat* upon Emperor Napoleon III that took place before the Paris Opera House on January 14, 1858. For this act he was tried and, because eight persons had died in the explosion of the bombs, executed. Emma was in labor at the time, giving birth to her third child, Marcel. Through the good offices of Orsini's lawyer, Jules Favre, she was able to send Orsini a letter before his death. Her presence was otherwise felt, for in his summation for the defense, Favre recalled Emma's part in the escape from Mantua. "A woman did not want him to die!" he cried. "With that delicacy, with that abnegation, with that sagacity of which only warm-hearted women are capable, she saw that he obtained the instruments of his liberation." But that was impossible this time.

IV

Without wavering in her devotion to her husband, Emma Herwegh always attracted to her side stronger men than he, and she encouraged them partly because she admired their energy and partly, one must suppose, because she hoped that their example might draw Herwegh away from the world of contemplation and back into that of action. Orsini was not the last to serve as such a model. He was in a sense succeeded by Friedrich Wilhelm Rüstow, a close friend of the Herweghs since 1852, who now became, by a kind of conversion, one of Emma's Italians.

Rüstow was a former lieutenant in the Prussian army, whose democratic convictions and prolific pamphleteering in behalf of military reform had involved him in a series of hearings and courts-martial. After the defiant publication of his *The German Military State Before and During the Revolution* in 1850, which attacked the standing army for being the inveterate foe of liberty and for having suppressed legitimate democratic aspirations during the recent fighting, Rüstow was charged with high treason. He was sentenced to the loss of his commission and to fortress detention for a period of thirty-one and a half years, with ten further years of police surveillance. Rüstow actually served six months of this horrendous sentence in the fortress at Posen but, in July 1850, as he was about to be transferred to another prison, he escaped. Dressed as a woman and with two companions, he made his way by carriage and train to Switzerland.

Rüstow settled in Zürich, where he earned his living by his pen and, after 1852, by his work as privatdocent for military studies at the university. He became a Swiss citizen in 1853 and shortly thereafter established contact with the new federal army, lecturing to its officers and writing technical and historical studies, including a handbook on tactics, a history of the infantry, and treatises on general staff functions, as well as accounts of the Crimean and Italian wars.

This hectic literary activity was apparently not enough to satisfy what Gustav Mayer called the "desperado" side of Rüstow's nature. He often took part in the emotional discussions of Emma's intimate circle. In May of 1860, when Garibaldi began his campaign in Sicily, it was perhaps not surprising that he proved susceptible to her suggestion—or, as her son has written, her demand—that he put his talents at the disposal of the Italian patriot. Filippo De Boni made the necessary arrangements. Rüstow went to Genoa in June, where he became chief of staff of a division and was asked by Mazzini to plan an attack upon the Papal States. This was canceled because of urgent needs in the south, and Rüstow joined Garibaldi in Sicily, where he served as Garibaldi's chief of staff and later, in the fighting at Salerno, Naples, and on the Volturno line, as commander of the Milan Brigade. He was a competent and audacious leader, having three horses shot under him on the Volturno front,

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but the campaign was over all too quickly. Garibaldi's willingness to hand the fruits of victory over to the Piedmontese, whom Rüstow regarded as the Prussians of Italy, left him without an occupation, and he returned to Zürich restless and discontented.

The conflict between the Prussian king and his parliament, which was coming to a head in 1861, led Rüstow to believe that there might soon be an opportunity to reverse the verdict of 1848–49, and he began to devise expansive plans for indulging it. He was particularly interested in persuading the National Union, a liberal movement in Germany that was working for national unification, to begin to recruit a national army, which might be based on the popular *Turnverein* organizations and could serve to counteract Prussian militarism. Emma Herwegh encouraged Rüstow in this and, indeed, seems to have corresponded with his closest German supporter, a member of the *Turnverein* in Koburg named Ludwig Schweigert. Schweigert wrote Emma a number of letters, in rather agitated prose, to assure her that what Rüstow and he were planning was "in harmony with [her] ideas, with [her] patriotic and sound political wishes," and that when the time for action came he wanted to be at Rüstow's side, "to fight, conquer or die with him." Somewhat gratuitously, he said that he regarded her as "*ein kreuzbraves Weibchen*" and a "*Mordsweiberl.*"

This wholly impractical plan—impractical because the leaders of the National Union steadfastly ignored it—acquired a new dimension in September of 1861, when the German socialist Ferdinand Lassalle, accompanied by Countess Sophie von Hatzfeldt (whose liberty and fortune he had saved from her husband in a notorious divorce case) came to Zürich. During their visit, the Herweghs arranged a large party at the Swan in their honor. The guest list included Ludmilla Assing, the niece of Karl August Varnhagen von Ense, a long-term friend of both the Lassalles and the Herweghs; the Russian nihilist Lydia Idaroff; Colonel Rüstow, wearing his red Garibaldian shirt; a good number of what would today be called the radical chic of the town; and the novelist Gottfried Keller. Keller had just been appointed cantonal *Staatsschreiber* and was to begin his service the next day. For whatever reason—celebration, apprehension, regret—he drank incautiously and, as he did so, became steadily more morose and disapproving of the company, in which the women were drinking champagne freely and smoking Havana cigars. When the guests called for Lassalle to show his skills as *magnétiseur*, and he began to dangle a gold watch above Herwegh's head, Keller's patience reached its limits. Shouting, "That's too much for me, you riffraff, you crooks!" He seized a chair, tried to brain the guest of honor, and had to be forcibly ejected.

The Lassalle visit had a more important result than to make Keller oversleep on his first day in his new post. It gave birth to a grandiose projection in which Rüstow's *Turnverein* plan, Lassalle's political ambitions, Emma Herwegh's Mazzinian connections, and perhaps her hope that Herwegh and she might yet wipe out the memory of Niederdossenbach by a new invasion of Germany, all played their part. This project called for an attack upon Austria by a mixed Italian-German force under Garibaldi's command, with other columns operating from the Slav lands, and perhaps from Switzerland. The attack would then spread to Germany and give Lassalle an opportunity to play tribune in a popular rising against reaction. Immediately after the party in the Swan, Lassalle and Sophie von Hatzfeldt, accompanied by Lydia Idaroff and Rüstow, set off in high good humor for Italy. Lassalle sent almost daily letters to the Herweghs to inform them of new ideas that had occurred to him and to report on the progress he was making in learning Italian. Unfortunately, nothing very tangible emerged from all of this, or from a visit that Lassalle paid to Garibaldi on Caprera in November, except that Rüstow, who was estranged from his wife, fell hopelessly in love with the countess, which rather complicated relations between the conspirators. The grand design received its death blow in August 1862, when Garibaldi made his rash attempt to take Rome and was defeated and captured at Aspromonte.

For Emma Herwegh, there was a crumb of comfort in the general disappointment, and that was that her husband showed some sign of reviving political interest. In April of 1863, when Lassalle asked him to aid in the effort to establish the Universal German Workers Association by writing an "inspired and inspiring poem" and also to become the representative of the U.G.W.A. for Switzerland,

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Herwegh agreed to do both, to Emma's great satisfaction. She had taken up Lassalle's cause as enthusiastically as she had the schemes of Orsini and Rüstow. During a trip to Berlin in November 1863, where she experienced the excitement engendered by Lassalle's speeches and witnessed the banning of his meetings and his own arrest, she wrote to Herwegh, "I regret that as a woman I cannot have myself inscribed as a member, for, if I could, I should do so in this very minute!" Herwegh's poem, she reported proudly, had been widely distributed, despite police attempts to confiscate it.

The heady excitement that Emma Herwegh felt in November 1863 did not last long. Lassalle threw his life away in a duel in August 1864. Rüstow, who was his second, was never forgiven by Sophie von Hatzfeldt for having, as she thought, encouraged Lassalle to fight. Thus he became an embittered, lonely man, who took his own life in 1878. Long before then it had become clear that Europe had changed and that its climate was no longer congenial to revolutionary *Eisenfresser* like Bakunin and Orsini and Rüstow and the others upon whom Emma Herwegh had doted. She was left to face the hard reality that in the new world of power and money that had been ushered in by the wars of 1866 and 1870 there would be no more romantic revolutions and that the rhetoric that had informed her husband's songs now seemed faintly comic. The poet understood this rather sooner than his wife and accommodated himself apathetically to the shadowy existence of the once famous. Emma fought against the truth and against the material deprivation that accompanied it. In October of 1865 she wrote to Ludwig Feuerbach, their longtime friend, that they were in dire straits, with no property left except Herwegh's books, upon which they had already borrowed seven thousand francs. She implored Feuerbach to help her find someone who might advance them enough to bring a little security to "a noble and rare nature who is being pitifully destroyed in the petty struggle of daily misery."

It was not the first of such letters, and it would not be the last. Poverty forced the Herweghs to leave Zürich in 1866 and, since the poet had now been granted an amnesty, they settled in Baden-Baden, where Herwegh died in 1875. By that time—although it may seem unkind to say so—Emma had, out of sheer necessity, developed sponging into a fine art. When the young Frank Wedekind met her in Paris in 1897, he was excited to meet a woman who had been a legend in her time, but he warned his mother that Frau Herwegh was now using the methods that she had once employed to maintain her husband's well-being in behalf of a son who was capable of supporting himself, and that if she received any requests for a loan she should refuse to honor them.

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The Amateur Profession

Career Counseling for Writers

J. C. FURNAS

When a form to be filled out asks "Profession," I put down "writer"—with misgivings. My *American Heritage Dictionary* defines *profession* as "an occupation or vocation requiring training in the liberal arts or the sciences and advanced study in a specialized field." That fits doctors, lawyers, engineers, architects, and is loosely recognizable for painters and sculptors, for most of them have attended some sort of art school. And before formal training in such fields was available, various versions of pertinent apprenticeship existed. I am uncertain, however, whether writing is or needs to be a profession.

Crosslights on this recently came from Jeremy Bernstein (AMERICAN SCHOLAR, Winter 1987): "I have heard every stripe of amateur writer talking about how they 'love' to write. I have never heard a professional writer say that he or she 'loves' to write. A professional writer is able to produce time after time . . . writing that someone *must* buy if the writer is to survive." Can one token of the professional writer be an economic anxiety so poignant that his feeling for his work falls at best short of love?

These remarks from an experienced and respected writer made me feel like a duckbill platypus—the morphological puzzle that, apparently unable to decide whether to be a reptile or a mammal, lays eggs and suckles its young. Fifty-odd years of writing for gain—some hundreds of free-lance reporting pieces for the old national slick magazines; four novels; a few short stories; nine large nonfiction books (two and a half Books-of-the-Month, one Literary Guild alternate, two others with minor awards); stray book reviews and critical pieces—should qualify me as a professional. Yet through earlier thin and later thick I have "loved to write." Or, shying from that schoolgirlish word, let me say raffishly that I have always been hooked on writing. My feeling about it is like that of Willie Stargell on being recently elected to the Cooperstown Hall of Fame: "I'd have played for free," he said. That may conceivably rouse sympathy in some of my fellow writers who, however loath to sound amateurish by saying openly that they love their sometimes severe taskmistress, nevertheless sense something like that lurking beneath occasional vexations.

Such diffidence probably reflects recent literary folklore about writers' woes, which is relatively recent—since 1800, say, when authorship assumed the arcane airs of pseudo-shamanism and its occupational hazards took on romantic glamour. Byron's matinee-idol ego trips and Poe's miseries actually gratify us. We are programmed to cherish Melville spinning *Pierre* out of his gut like a tortured spider and look away from Trollope extruding novels as calmly as a tube spurting toothpaste. We recognize that merely to pick up the pencil or sit down at the typewriter costs the generic writer tooth-gritting self-discipline. At cruelly unpredictable intervals, "writer's block" deadens his creativeness for days and weeks of introspective hell. His resilience is leached away by the crass demands of editors or publishers numb to the emotional needs of the writers whose intimate skills they exploit.

✪ J. C. FURNAS's latest book is *Fanny Kemble*, which won the George Freedley Award. He is now at work on an autobiography, tentatively entitled *The Weaver's Shuttle*.

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Like the unnatural teat in the witch's armpit, these traumata betoken special powers rewarding to possess but keeping the possessor from loving the attendant activity. Is there a Prometheus complex? By now such accumulated assumptions may subliminally foster seizures of writer's block, for, without angst and plenty of it, how can one be sure of being professional? Enter the catatonic or convulsive shaman-at-a-typewriter as role model, as this numinous tradition of subversive agonies attracts certain temperaments toward writing. Anyway, these clichés are widely accepted. The day I began drafting this article, the radio carried a review of *Throw Momma Off the Train*, a movie comedy about a victim of writer's block mired down in teaching a college class in Creative Writing.

Look further back than the founding Romantics, however, and possible distinctions between professional and amateur blur, because neither genus shows clearly defining traits. Try to envision Chaucer coming down with writer's block while spinning the *Pardoner's Tale* or Swift having to bully himself into picking up the goose quill to get on with Lemuel Gulliver's adventures. Since Chaucer's day preceded printing, of course, he never knew the book trade's warping pressures—or even wolves at the door, for he was primarily a well-regarded diplomat–civil servant. Just as confusingly, Swift was for a long time Sir William Temple's secretary-steward, then a beneficed clergyman dabbling in politics. Doubtless, the chief writings of both afforded self-prescribed respite from practical affairs. They were, in fact, Sunday writers, whose products turned out better than Winston Churchill's landscapes.

An important point. Henri Rousseau, Gauguin, Grandma Moses—few Sunday painters attain sufficient fame to be hung in the museum galleries, whereas in literature until around 1800 the reverse was true: few notable writers originally looked to their pens for "survival." From Grub Street's precarious scramble came little of notable merit: Samuel Johnson was one of the few exceptions. Shakespeare was an actor doubling as company staff writer; Milton, a scholar of private means, first inclined toward holy orders, became a Roundhead civil servant; Congreve was a gentleman-pensioner of government; Defoe a London businessman turned political journalist in middle age; Richardson a bookseller; Fielding a fledgling lawyer; Byron and Shelley patricians of private means. Jane Austen, Maria Edgeworth, and the Brontës had family-household livelihoods. Strange as it now sounds, the bulk of the writing that the English-speaking world has for birthright was fruit of a minor hobby of the educated social strata—amateurisms that might well get printed but had no pressing economic purpose.

As American literature struggled into the light, it was the same story. Few significant writers "survived" on writing alone. Hawthorne tried it and had his ups but also his downs, which were relieved by long dependence on government jobs. Melville tried it, met disaster, and survived only through family subsidy and dreary years as a customs inspector. Cooper was a landed patrician with an early career in the U.S. Navy; Holmes was an eminent physician. Longfellow's professorships floated him until he made national icons of Paul Revere, Hiawatha, and Evangeline. Bryant and Whitman were newspapermen. All of those except Whitman came of prosperous-or-better upper-class families. The housewife Mrs. Stowe did her hobby-scribbling for pin money until Uncle Tom spun her into orbit as a career writer. Emily Dickinson was a family-supported, crypto-Sunday poet. Henry James was the first important American example of an uninterrupted career in serious fiction—and it was inherited means that enabled him to try it, though later James relied on his literary earnings to live.

Since writing as cultivated hobby so long dominated literature, it follows that one's ancestors' nephews, asked what they planned to do, seldom replied, "Be a writer." For back then it would rarely have occurred to a youth, still less often to a youth's parents, to rank writing among "professions in which men engage, / The army, the navy the church and the stage." Youth might choose the law and take to Sunday writing that, getting into print, might gradually become the major concern, as happened in the cases of Fielding, Irving, Arthur Pendennis, and Edgar Lee Masters. Joseph Conrad and William McFee were ship's officers whose off-watch writings were taken seriously enough to suggest writing careers ashore. William Carlos Williams kept up his physician's practice. (Somerset Maugham's

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different case doesn't count: he went into medicine as preparation for writing in the cold-blooded belief that it would show him people under a wide range of interesting extreme conditions.) Both scenarios are familiar in our own time. Young Joyce Cary served awhile in Britain's West Africa colonial government (and incidentally was a better-than-most Sunday painter) before concentrating on writing. Edgar Lee Masters was a law partner of Clarence Darrow, and Wallace Stevens a high-echelon insurance executive.

It hardly matters whether it was caution, habit, or divided affections that made those renowned figures—and others who could be cited—keep on with their original callings after Sunday writing proved a springboard. It may matter that in this respect, as in several others, writing seems to differ from other arts—also from the professions because of the number practicing it. Even now that telephones and tapes have taken over from the letter, more people still occasionally organize words on paper than ever try to practice law or medicine. Hence, until our century, writing lacked the facilities mandated by the dictionary definition of *profession* for "advanced study" in its "specialized field," though society had long found it advisable to arrange formal training for aspirant doctors, lawyers, and so on.

That neglect of word-juggling certainly led to no shortage of writers of all degrees of competence. Nevertheless, the university, finally mindful of having been bred out of literature by pedagogy, set about filling the gap by offering courses in "Creative Writing." That label did serve to distinguish these courses from required composition courses meant to harass freshmen into heightened literacy. Yet the phrase not only sounds at first hearing like oblique reference to the first chapter of Genesis, but its wistful windiness was and remains ominous: a class of a couple of dozen undergraduates of assorted sexes abetting one another in a common yearning to "be a writer," reading their works aloud for comradely criticism under the creative smiles of the faculty instructor who has published one novel and is working on the second, minimalist this time. . . .

The treacherous analogy is to the art-school class: an established painter and a roomful of earnest young talents each at his own easel profiting from both the veteran's counsel and their peers' give-and-take. Apparently those socialized conditions reliably foster graphic skills and sound aesthetic principles. The analogy fails, however, because in any such sense *how-to-write* cannot be taught. All that can be hoped for is how-*not*-to-write, which is necessarily hamperingly doctrinaire, and in any case is the province of those freshman courses. That is not just my judgment. Hear Mark Medoff, professor at New Mexico State University, Tony Award-winning playwright: "Nobody can teach anybody to write. There are only two ways to learn to write. Read. Write. Don't do it if you can do something else" ("In Praise of Teachers," *New York Times Magazine,* November 9, 1986). For corroboration from a presumably disinterested spectator: Felix Rohatyn, senior partner in Wall Street's Lazard Freres & Company, on plans to teach ethics in schools of business administration: "I no more believe that ethics can be taught past the age of ten than I believe in the teaching of so-called creative writing" (*New York Times*, op-ed, June 3, 1987).

To be fair, Creative Writing courses may well leave a valuable residual effect in enhancing students' awareness of literary values just as, one understands, even a small degree of performance skill on a musical instrument enhances one's pleasure in music. But that benefit can be obtained solo and less elaborately. The major consequence of Creative Writing is unmistakable: the according of academic credit to a handful of students for doing what, if they stand any chance of ever "being writers," they'd be doing anyway on their own time without any well-meant nudging from the university. The Brontë girls hardly needed any writer-in-residence hovering over their family mutual-admiration society. Mark Twain and William Dean Howells did well without ever having gone to college, let alone one listing Creative Writing 8 in its catalogue; add Ernest Hemingway and John O'Hara to the list. In your grandfather's time, writing-minded students at universities managed to find and abet one another without curricular auspices, and if some genial faculty member wanted to gather under his wings a little group of aspirants on his own time, nobody stopped him. But hours under the elms now devoted to credit-earning writing courses, in my view, would be better devoted

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to gaining elementary acquaintance with disciplines—for starters, biology, anthropology, psychology—likely to form nourishing compost for young writers' sympathies and scope of vision. In a very narrow fashion, Somerset Maugham had a sound idea.

While Creative Writing was still only endemic, our culture wished on the newspaper city room an informal sideline as forcing-frame for such writing aspirants. Their patterns were Mark Twain and Rudyard Kipling, gradually reinforced by Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser, David Graham Phillips, Ben Hecht . . . fusing into a new literary model—the surefooted, debonair, increasingly cynical reporter getting by on his meager salary while whittling away nights on the novel that will send him airborne into fame. Hemingway, of course, became the permanent archetype. This was an improvement, for city editors' standards of how-to-write tend to be crisper than any university's, and newspaper experience in youth often does turn out valuable writers. But, maybe because newspapers were too few to handle the full load of aspirants, universities stepped in again. Following the lead of the University of Missouri in 1908 and then of the Pulitzer bequest to Columbia University, schools of journalism proliferated from coast to coast and have blithely survived Abraham Flexner's scorn: "[They] do nothing for undergraduates that is worth their time. . . . Does anyone really suppose that Harvard, having no school of journalism, will . . . furnish fewer editors, reviewers and reporters than Columbia will?" (*Universities*, Oxford University Press, 1930).

The problem of whether one can teach what is learned only by individual, trial-and-error experience is at least addressed, if not entirely met, by arranging periods of actual newspaper chores for journalism students. Add that the deans and other faculty of such schools are often retired managing editors or TV anchormen who can personally recommend promising graduates to former colleagues on the old paper or network. It remains regrettable, however, that the very existence of these presumptive academic counterparts of schools of medicine and law heightens the illusion that journalism—and by association "being a writer"—is a profession. Suppose a keen freshman does well in Creative Writing, enters the school of journalism, graduates into a cub's berth on the Zenith *Bugle*, earns his salt there while still intent on "being a writer," and eventually has a solid career with novels about the seamy side of a midwestern city—is he more or less of a professional than Dashiell Hammett, who never had an alma mater and never yelled at a copyboy? To quote Flexner again: "[Such] questions answer themselves." Yet, as I write this, New York's well-considered New School is advertising in its "most extensive writing program in the country" a course in Creative Journalism, presumably blending both of the university's attempts to oblige.

Maybe the definition of *professional* should require "deriving primary livelihood from the chosen activity." That would allow for the author-beneficiaries of today's zillion-dollar advances on anticipated best-sellers; also certain less-than-blockbusting novelists whose loyal publics can be counted on to buy thousands of copies of each successive job; and the handful of nonfiction stalwarts uncannily shrewd at covering subjects likely to catch the public eye of the moment. Yet that criterion is far too narrow. Six years ago the Authors Guild asked its members how they were doing. In spite of fattening from blockbuster deals, the average annual income from writing of the 2,239 dues-payers responding was less than $5,000. Even allowing for relatively inactive elders and young members still damp behind the literary ears, writing with revenue at all in mind is obviously pretty much what it was eight or nine generations ago—which, except for a few exceptional figures, is nothing to rely on. No wonder the run of accepted writers remain the Sunday kind—gaining basic livelihood by some other means, often academic posts. This is a profession? Try another revised definition: "an occasionally remunerative recreation."

For all that, writing will continue to attract susceptible temperaments, but their nature is hard to define. What psychologist's pigeonhole can accommodate both Henry David Thoreau and Guy de Maupassant?

Practicing writers, part- or full-time, are understandably put out when some perplexed or doting parent confides that Jason or Jennifer is entering the university and plans to "be a writer" and could you . . . ? The easy and honest reflex is: "My only advice would

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be *don't*!" in a voice as firm as Noël Coward's adjuring Mrs. Worthington not to put her daughter on the stage. That can do no harm. If the kid has what it takes, he'll probably stay on that course somehow; and if he doesn't, he doubtless never had it. In either case, he will probably steer himself better if cured of thinking of "being a writer" as something solid. One should stroke the beard and tell him something like this:

Don't bother with creative writing courses or waste time in the school of journalism. Remember Flexner's advice given above. But put in some time on a newspaper if you can arrange the opportunity to do so.

Don't major in English. Universities tend to neglect the aspect of literature that will bring out the best in you, if there is something there, and that caused a wise man—I wish I could recall who—to say its chief mission is "to delight," not presumably to provide grist for Ph.D. mills to grind exceeding small, or even to manifest self-conscious ego trips. Never forget that, though writing is very important, writers are not.

Do take the academic opportunity to learn your way around in at least one foreign language—French, German, Italian, Spanish, in that order of preference. Goethe said nobody knows his own tongue unless he is well acquainted with another. Choose language courses entailing wide reading, not intensive analysis of a few idolized masterpieces.

Read, read, read! as Professor Medoff so brusquely recommends. Yes, read the current stuff that gets conspicuously reviewed. Most of it will, to be polite, look watery by the time you are middle-aged, but such slippage is built into any literary period, and you should have the feel of your time. Concentrate on what the trendy set will regard as archaic—the riches between 1580 and, say, 1940. The savory virtues of your elders and betters will sink in now better than later. This is your time to imbue the marrow of your bones and the fluid in your spine with the endogenous pungencies and synergisms of the mother tongue that you hope to be privileged to use. Read the King James Bible, Shakespeare, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Thoreau, and *Huckleberry Finn* over and over, so they come out of your ears. For further guidance, take a survey course in English and another in American literature, but pay little heed to the lecturers' comments; read the plums you choose as though they were written yesterday just for you. Or to save wasting time in lecture halls, invest $3.25 in one of those *Cliff Notes* pamphlets that predigest literature from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* to Kurt Vonnegut for students boning up for exams. Its back cover lists some two hundred standard items thus vandalized because they are likely to be "taught" in literature courses—which results in an admirably handy roster of the reading that your word-faculty will find enriching. Those books' vocabularies, materials, and footwork will never be yours, but if you are lucky, their infiltrating essences will endow you with a feel for words and their marshaling as intimate as that of a fish with water.

When Flaubert, say, or Virginia Woolf, or Ring Lardner gives you a special glow, absorb pretty much everything they wrote, but without chaperonage from academia—Flaubert in French, mind. As far as possible, eschew translations almost altogether. The few exceptions should include the masterful warmth and rumble of Charles Cotton's Montaigne and Sir Thomas Urquhart's Rabelais. The shortcomings of so many translations were probably what made Gertrude Stein, when Garson Kanin showed her a list of one hundred must-read books for students, throw it down in disgust and snort: "Good God, they're hardly reading anything in English!" So postpone practically all translations until after your thirtieth birthday, since more than minimal contact with them while your word faculty is still cartilaginous may stunt its growth and warp its shape. I first met *Candide* in a standard translation. The content plainly had a vivacious bent, but the insipid English embodying it muffled everything. Some years later, the original French was a burst of sunshine. I was shocked a while ago to learn that a certain Ivy League college (name withheld out of possibly misplaced deference) was listing an undergraduate course in the French novel using translations throughout.

Put aside the modern notion of "writing" as a lifelong, full-time, monolithic, sole-recourse career. Commit yourself to Sunday writing and see where it takes you. After college, or during summer vacations, learn a skill or trade that will support you (probably very modestly) while leaving you spare time and energy to fumble toward learning to write. Maritime radio operator would be fine—good pay, board and room thrown in, and "Sparks" usu-

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ally has more time off than Charles Lamb's India House clerkship ever afforded him; but American ships are scarce these days. Take advantage of community college courses in-things like dental hygiene, lab technology, TV or Xerox servicing—anything legal that, without heavy labor, brings a basic living and that won't stay on your mind after hours. Take advantage of the increasing prevalence of the four-day work week, which leaves a nice block of three Sundays in a week, as in Poe's story. Part-time jobs, too, are getting more numerous.

But beware of that berth in a literary classroom to which the writing-minded often resort. Your bread-and-butter occupation should have nothing to do with words and books. A weekly change of idiom and atmosphere will keep both fresher, and the necessary contacts with bench-mates, customers, and supervisors will help preserve your sense of objective reality—for writing is insidiously solipsistic. And negatively, the classroom's entanglement with current fashions in criticism necessarily dulls one's verbal antennae. As for teaching Creative Writing, listen to Walter Tevis (successful novelist, *The Hustler*, for instance) celebrating his escape from that: ". . . teaching hurt. . . . I was a professor of English . . . trying to write at the same time. . . . I found myself leaving my enthusiasm in the classroom. I enjoyed the students, but, as long as I had a live audience, I didn't have a second need for an unseen reading audience. . . ." Nor are editorial jobs advisable. The talents of Dickens, Thackeray, Howells, and Hawthorne survived extended editorial responsibilities, but all of them were well into stride before risking such attrition from others' words and awkwardness. For general advice in this context: Trying to make out on the occasional check among the rejection slips seldom improves one's writing. It leads to wild swings and misbegotten imitations of what seems to prove acceptable.

I can recommend all of the foregoing because so little of it—chiefly the avid reading and the foreign language—comes out of personal experience. Had anybody given me such counsel sixty years ago, my path might have been smoother. Yet I was a wrong-headed, stubborn youngster and probably wouldn't have taken it anyway.

Heavy Editing

THOMAS WOLFE AND HIS EDITORS. *By Leslie Field. University of Oklahoma Press. $18.95.*

Reviewed by JOHN HALBERSTADT

"No textual controversy in the field of 20th century American literature has been more heated," a scholar declares on the dust jacket of Leslie Field's *Thomas Wolfe and His Editors*, than the one over the true authorship of Thomas Wolfe's posthumous books: *The Web and the Rock, You Can't Go Home Again*, and *The Hills Beyond*. Are these books essentially written by Wolfe in spite of enormous cuts, splicings, and other rearrangements by Edward Aswell of Harper & Brothers, Wolfe's posthumous editor (the traditional view)? Or are they predominantly the creations of Aswell himself, an opportunist who, without his author's approval, exceeded his authority and never fully disclosed his own contribution to the final books (the dissenting view)?

Each side has its zealots, and after eight years, the debate—which first began in the *New York Review of Books* letters columns and *Harvard Magazine* articles and which then spilled over into news features up to two pages in length in the *Village Voice*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, and many other American dailies and foreign publications—shows no signs of dying out. The debate, in fact, recently inspired Harvard University's David Herbert Donald to comment, in *Look Homeward: A Life of Thomas Wolfe*, the biography that won a second Pulitzer for the historian, that he stands in between these "two extreme positions." Professor Donald feels the books are definitely Wolfe's work but that Aswell's editing was "unacceptable": Aswell, in Donald's phrase, took "impermissible liberties" with Wolfe's manuscript.

Leslie Field's book is a systematic attempt to put the whole matter—a matter that Eliot Fremont-Smith of the *Village Voice* has nicknamed "Wolfegate"—to rest. But his apparently objective tone must be carefully monitored since Field can be selective in the choice of cases to prove his point and because,

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✪ JOHN HALBERSTADT's work has appeared in the *Yale Review*, *New York Review of Books*, and *Harvard Magazine*.

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in the end, Field's book provides a strong defense of the traditional viewpoint.

Coolly, carefully, Field reviews the published arguments of the main combatants in the debate, along with those of some of their supporters. In one corner stands Richard Kennedy, the heavyweight, who represents the orthodox position. He was the first scholar to explain how Wolfe, shortly before his death at age thirty-seven, gave Aswell the fully laid-out yet inchoate scrapyard of his last manuscript. At this point Field should have said something about Maxwell Perkins of Scribner's, for his is the name that always leaps to mind when one thinks of Wolfe and the subject of editing. Perkins produced—the word *edited* is a euphemism for Perkins's efforts on these manuscripts—*Look Homeward, Angel* (1929) and *Of Time and the River* (1935), which appeared during Wolfe's lifetime. Field would have done well to make clear that Wolfe, in spite of his public praise of Perkins's assistance, privately resented the increasing liberties Perkins took with his manuscripts. *Of Time and the River,* for example, a nine-hundred-page book, represents only half the length of the book Wolfe initially envisioned.

The discomfort with Perkins was half the reason, in my opinion, that Wolfe started calling publishers, beginning his conversations with them by announcing: "My name is Wolfe. Would you be interested in publishing me?" This telemarketing led him to Edward Aswell, a southerner who was the same age as Wolfe (both men were thirty-seven in 1937) and who was interested and promptly negotiated a contract for Wolfe's next manuscript, offering Wolfe on behalf of the firm of Harper & Brothers ten thousand dollars for it "sight unseen," as Richard Kennedy reported.

In 1938, Wolfe called Aswell to his suite at the Chelsea Hotel in New York to hand him his work in progress. This was not a novel or even the rough draft for one, but a more-than-million-word collection of previously published material, as well as sketches cut by Perkins from earlier books. Wolfe meant to recycle all this material in a new book. Some chapters in it (there were more than two hundred; a chapter could mean any section, "large or small," as Field notes, and some of them were extremely crude and fragmentary) came with "variant" versions, and Wolfe had not yet decided which of the variants he preferred.

The collection's hero, Kennedy pointed out, still bore a variety of names because the hundreds of chapters had been written for various purposes over a ten-year period. Although the chapters for the most part followed a definite autobiographical sequence, great gaps yawned in the narrative. Much was suggested but not completed, and the chapters had not yet been unified stylistically with preceding or succeeding material.

In a conversation with Kennedy when the latter was a young researcher, Aswell called the collection a "mess." It was clearly unpublishable as it stood. Merely to read all the manuscript and typescript, carbons and fragments in this collection, Field reports, would require "being at the [Harvard] library" housing it "until the year 2000." (Field, Kennedy, Donald, and others who have worked on this material deserve prizes for their stamina alone.)

Wolfe claimed he only wanted to "familiarize" Aswell with the general scheme of his book. He knew he needed to put another year of "steady, uninterrupted work" into the book, but the plan was clear, the parts had been labeled, and Wolfe felt a vacation was in order, so he boarded a westbound train. It was on this trip that he died.

Aswell was now alone in New York with this monumental scrapyard for which he had advanced ten thousand dollars, but in connection with which he no longer had an author to consult. What did he do? Not before 1962, with the publication of Richard Kennedy's book *The Window of Memory* (which appeared twenty years after Aswell completed his editing), did readers have any notion of the way Aswell coped with his dilemma.

Aswell "set aside the initial portion" about Wolfe's hero's ancestors—"perhaps 70,000 words," Field quotes Kennedy as saying. He cut more than fifty chapters and spliced others in order to produce *The Web and the Rock* (1939) and *You Can't Go Home Again* (1940), the first two posthumous Thomas Wolfe books. Kennedy introduces the term "creative editing" to describe Aswell's carpentry job in assembling part of the first of these books.

When it came to the manuscript portions to be published as *You Can't Go Home Again,* Aswell, Kennedy wrote, "tampered with Wolfe's style as he had not done before." He "identified himself with Wolfe to the extent that he felt free to play author with the manu-

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script." Field replays the traditional account here, but does not take sides. This would have been the ideal opportunity to remind readers that, according to the outline for the manuscript, which Kennedy published, Wolfe planned an epic that would have begun with the creation of America itself from its "lifeless" state. Wolfe also envisioned a search for a procedure for transcendence as a strong motif in the novel. Aswell alone decided to subdivide it all into a series of conventional novels. Field and Kennedy, however, both agree with Aswell's claim that Wolfe probably would not have minded how the manuscript was broken up. Field does repeat Kennedy's misgivings that neither book provided any "acknowledgment of Edward Aswell's guiding hand," and that there had been no acknowledgment that all the italicized linking sections of *The Web and the Rock* and *You Can't Go Home Again* had been written by Aswell.

Aswell still had material for one more book. He took the seventy thousand words about Wolfe's hero's ancestry he had cut from the beginning of the manuscript and published them last, as if these chapters had been conceived as an independent short novel, to which he attached an anthology of sketches he had cut from all over the mass of material during the years he mined it. That is how *The Hills Beyond* (1941) was born, the final posthumous book by Thomas Wolfe—though "by" here suddenly becomes a highly ambiguous word. Aswell appended a note to the book in which he concedes that "reams" had been cut from the original manuscript, but which otherwise leaves the distinct impression that heavy editing had not been required. Once the "reams" had been snipped, he wrote, the remainder cohered "like . . . a jigsaw puzzle."

Over the years, Richard Kennedy came to feel that Aswell had done a "good" or "admirable" or "commendable" job. Field relies overmuch on lengthy quotations from Kennedy in his account, but his own tone is mainly neutral. This tone changes when Field turns to an essay called "The Making of Thomas Wolfe's Posthumous Novels" that I published in the *Yale Review* in 1980 in order to challenge the new gospel of "creative editing" and "play[ing] author." I was not the first, I rush to add, to argue that Aswell had "no right" to edit Wolfe as radically as he had—no right to compose, acknowledged or not, those italicized linking pages in the later novels.

In my essay, I quoted a confession Aswell made to a friend in 1951, in which he not only confided that the italicized pages before the last segment of *You Can't Go Home Again* were his own work, but that even the thought in a particular passage the friend had asked about was Aswell's, not Wolfe's. He boasted that the thought was not based on anything Wolfe wrote, or even that Wolfe had said. Field's book is the first to quote extensively from Aswell's letters to this close friend on the subject of editing, but the most remarkable of these confessions has been left out of the selection.

Aswell had no right, I argued, to cut so many chapters without precisely identifying his own surgery. (One chapter, which Kennedy identified and which concerned sleazy types Wolfe had known, was discarded in its entirety; another, mostly cut, about an "orphan girl," remains, in my opinion, one of the most beautiful things Wolfe ever wrote. It is still unpublished.)

Aswell, in my view, had no right to rearrange the chapters surviving his manuscriptectomy, or the scenes within them. He had no authorization, I maintain, to splice together "hybrid chapters" and even "hybrid characters." On more than five occasions, Aswell amalgamated chapters and variant versions of chapters into literary collages of his own making. (Aswell might take a few pages from one variant, add a page from a second, write a transition himself, then mix in scraps from third and fourth sources found elsewhere in the Wolfe material.) For example, he took a town drunk he found at one end of the scrapyard of Wolfe's manuscript and joined him to a cocaine addict he found at the other to produce a minor character in *You Can't Go Home Again* who had the attributes of both the drunk and the cocaine addict. He crossed Wolfe's description of two young salesmen with the dialogue Wolfe wrote for an older literary executor in order to produce an important character in *You Can't Go Home Again* named Randy Shepperton. In the note he attached to the last of Wolfe's books, Aswell praises *Wolfe's* artistry in the invention of Randy.

Field is right to isolate the "hybrids" charge as among the most serious of those against Aswell's heavy editing. Referring to the difference between Richard Kennedy and me, Field perceptively summarizes: "Halberstadt

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. . . saw 'hybrids'" where Kennedy saw "interweaving." Aswell only followed "Wolfe's [own] methods," Kennedy argued, "in taking pages from one 'chapter' and placing them within another." As for the drunk-addict character, Kennedy argued that Aswell had to make this composite in order to reduce the identifiability of the drunk whom he had snipped from the "sleazy people" chapter he had discarded in its entirety.

The "risk of libel" was serious, Kennedy pointed out, given an author such as Wolfe, whose autobiographical tendencies had inspired lawsuits in his lifetime. With the drunk-addict and with Randy Shepperton, the more extreme hybrid, Kennedy held, Aswell only followed a "Wolfian [*sic*] practice for minor characters." Readability was a decisive factor. If Aswell had not mixed the older man into the Randy Shepperton composite, the man's appearance would have stood as a "puzzling episode" in the story, since he is described by a friend who has no "previous history in the story."

At this point Field discards the referee's clip-on bow tie and puts on the gloves himself, contending that he will get to the bottom of the question of the true authorship of the books by a close examination of three "cameo test cases"—that is, three chapters from the later books. One is the chapter in *The Web and the Rock* called "The Quarrel," which was based on the actual quarreling between Wolfe and his Jewish mistress, Aline Bernstein. Aswell had to join "disparate manuscripts and typescripts" to create the chapter to begin with, Field finds. He had to play "Wolfe time and time again" as he "orchestrate[d] the material as he thought Wolfe would have done." Then, Field saw, Aswell had no choice but to "expung[e]" obscene allegations directed at characters modeled on members of Aline Bernstein's family, and dilute the anti-Semitism. He had to cut paragraphs, and write a line himself.

Field—as far as I can determine from his description of Aswell's raw materials—has here examined a mini-hybrid chapter in this cameo test case. In a valuable and ambitious, but selective literary autopsy, Field examines none of the full-blown hybrid chapters and characters at the heart of the Wolfegate controversy. Field's final opinion is that, "in a most difficult position," Aswell performed "remarkable" service. He has no reservations about any of the cuts or splicings Aswell had to make. They were all required, and beneficial. "I can only echo Kennedy's words," he explains: " 'Not only did [Aswell] exercise critical skill but he also tried, to the best of his understanding, to fulfill Wolfe's intentions. . . .' "

After eight years, this is what the debate is about—not so much a factual controversy as a dispute over the latitude editors ought to be allowed in fulfilling writers' intentions, especially the latitude to transform the vision and language of romantic prose poets like Thomas Wolfe for their own firms' commercial purposes. Wolfe planned a single epic novel, but Aswell decided to transform the manuscript into three conventional novels that he would publish over a three-year period. This way he could recover his firm's ten-thousand-dollar advance. Some critics, like Field and Kennedy—whom Field praises at the end of his book as "my good friend and colleague"—feel that, by doing so, Aswell actually did what Wolfe would have wanted, but still others, myself among them, feel that Aswell badly distorted Wolfe's intentions.

Superiority Complex

THE LIFE OF KENNETH TYNAN. *By Kathleen Tynan. Morrow. $22.95.*

Reviewed by WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

At one point soon after their undergraduate days at Oxford had ended, Kenneth Tynan and some of his literary friends argued with each other about which of them came from the most deprived family. John Wain noted that his father was a mere dentist, while Kingsley Amis said that his father was but a minor civil servant. Topping them both, Alan Brien held forth his father as the real article, a "fitter" who earned but two pound ten a week, and thus was clearly from the lowest social category. But Tynan had the last word: "No, no, no, I am lower, because I'm a b-b-bastard." The stutter was authentic (indeed lifelong),

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and he was not bragging idly, since his father—a businessman named Sir Peter Peacock, family man and mayor of a town in the north of England—led a double life, the other half of which involved Rose Tynan in Birmingham. In 1927 she gave birth to Kenneth Peacock Tynan, an event with which the son never quite came to terms.

Or so claims his second wife, Kathleen Tynan, in her densely detailed biography. Tynan himself said that it wasn't traumatic to find—even at age twenty-one, when he maintains he first was told—that his parents weren't married, and he found that as he grew older his illegitimacy became less interesting to him. But Kathleen Tynan takes a very different tone about what she calls "the pathetic lie," arguing, "The past both crippled and animated him, forced him into a tightrope of insecurity without which his life might have had less flavor. Despite and because of the handicap, he soared. Where might he have flown had he been free?" The last question is difficult to entertain, since one cannot imagine Tynan on anything *but* a tightrope—call it of insecurity or productivity—whereon he not only walked but strutted. His undergraduate days, which provide some of the biographer's best pages, were dedicated—in Paul Johnson's words—to bringing "glamour back to Oxford." Johnson recalls Tynan's arrival at the Magdalen College lodge, Michaelmas term, 1946, the place full of returned servicemen: "Suddenly," said Johnson, "in the midst of that throng came this tall, epicene figure wearing a plum-coloured suit and a lavender tie, followed by what appeared to be a cortège of porters carrying trunks. He turned to one of his bearers and said, 'Have a care with that trunk, my man. It is freighted with golden shirts.' " Oscar Wilde could scarcely have improved on it.

Tynan sometimes used his "epicene" appearance for sexual gain, deflecting male competition, so his biographer says, by encouraging the rumor that he was homosexual, while sweeping various women off their feet—an activity he was just getting into the swing of and perfected later on. (The ruse reminds one of Horner's feigned impotence in Wycherley's *The Country Wife*.) When it came time to be examined for military service, Tynan showed up at the exam with a homosexual case history selected out of Krafft-Ebing, doused himself with Yardley scent (a girlfriend's), and told the psychiatrist that he could not have sexual relations without the aid of spurs. Evidently impressed by all the labor that had gone into his act, the military rejected him. Meanwhile Tynan kept in trim by auditioning for a "seminude" review at London's famous burlesque house, the Windmill. Again he was rejected, this time by the theater's owner, who called out at the end of an Oxford cabaret piece, "Thank you, no! You're much too queer for our audience."

But there was nothing the least queer, facetious, or half-hearted about the way Tynan pursued his London career. Although for a while he both acted and directed, he soon established himself as a writer; by the time of his marriage to the American later-to-be novelist, Elaine Dundy, in 1951, he was contributing regular drama criticism to the *Spectator*, film criticism to *Sight and Sound*, and other occasional pieces. (In 1954 he would begin with the *Observer*, and later serve a stretch on *The New Yorker*.) Kathleen Tynan points out that over the three years 1951–53, "he wrote hundreds of thousands of published words of criticism and journalism, as well as two books." (The first, *He That Plays the King*, was a study of actors and acting; the second a portrait of Alec Guinness.) Tynan's descriptions of acting in those early books and reviews are the clearest sign of his genius as a theater critic, and they are (like Shaw's) as permanently rereadable as any such writing can be. Here, for example, he dilates on Margaret Rutherford, she of the Ealing comedies, as Lady Wishfort in Congreve's *Way of the World*:

> Miss Rutherford is filled with a monstrous vitality: the soul of Cleopatra has somehow got trapped in the corporate shape of an entire lacrosse team. The unique thing about [her] is that she can act with her chin alone; among its many moods I especially cherish the chin commanding, the chin in doubt, and the chin at bay.

And he fixed her vividly, "darting about her boudoir like a gigantic bumblebee at large in a hothouse."

When Tynan encountered an actual Cleopatra, as it were, in the one Vivien Leigh played with Sir Laurence Olivier in 1951, he wanted more, much more:

> "You were a boggler ever," says Antony at one point to his idle doxy; and one can feel Miss Leigh's

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imagination boggling at the thought of playing Cleopatra. Taking a deep breath and resolutely focussing her periwinkle charm, she launches another of her careful readings; ably and passionlessly she picks her way among its great challenges, presenting a glibly mown lawn where her author had imagined a jungle.

In other words, he wanted more of a lacrosse team. As for her husband, Sir Laurence, Tynan had already written about his performance as Hotspur in *Henry IV*, part 1, at the Old Vic in 1945: "With the roughness of the warrior chieftain, he mixed the heavy-handed tenderness of the very virile husband: and knotted the performance into a unity by a trick, the stammer which prefaced every word beginning with the letter 'w'." (A demonstration follows in relation to a particular speech of Hotspur's.)

The point about these vivid pieces of description (though "description" is too weak for the inventiveness of language that—in T. S. Eliot's phrase—"creates the object that it contemplates") is that their energy is ultimately impersonal. Although he didn't much like Vivien Leigh's rendering of Cleopatra, although he thought Rutherford's "vitality" was "monstrous," and although he was wholly admiring of Olivier's brilliant theatrical treatment of Hotspur, there is a high-spirited playfulness about his account of each, expressed through a resourceful summoning of the exact word and image. Tynan's criticism is almost never grudging or mean-spirited; nor is it to be faulted for reckless cleverness at the expense of its subject. Vivien Leigh must have forgiven him; at least, in a photograph taken in 1960, she seems comfortable enough with the arm he has draped around her shoulder. Orson Welles, an early friend, also seems to have eventually subordinated his anger at being called—in Tynan's review of Welles's 1952 performance as Othello—"Citizen Coon." Even Truman Capote, whose most-hated list (after a review of *In Cold Blood*) was made up of Tynan and Sammy Davis, Jr., finally buried the hatchet, albeit drunkenly, in a "glazed rapprochement" at some Hollywood party.

For me the most interesting pages of the biography concern Tynan's partnership with Olivier at the National Theatre for ten years beginning in 1963. In that time, seventy-nine plays were staged, more than half of which were both critical and box-office successes (Kathleen Tynan tells us that the usual ratio in the commercial theater is one box-office success in twelve). Tynan suggested thirty-two of these productions and collaborated on twenty; his wife notes, "People who worked at that theater remember it as a golden period, subsequently unmatched." At first Olivier distrusted Tynan, and he never became close to him ("We were never Mick and Mack," confided Sir Laurence), but they respected one another and worked effectively despite their different styles. Those styles are nicely delineated by Olivier's wife, Joan Plowright (one of the many pertinent people interviewed by Mrs. Tynan), who says about Olivier:

> When alone with Ken he found it a bit exhausting. Endless chat, and making of points, and Larry likes to have a break and a vulgar joke. When Ken recognized the need for relaxation and tried to talk about sex or something, they weren't on the same wavelength. Ken's jokes were highly intellectual and literary. Larry's were fairly low, or theatrical. He hadn't read Kafka or whoever.

That strikes the right note surely, as does Kathleen Tynan's description of a visit to the Oliviers in Brighton, where after vintage champagne was served in the Regency drawing room, "Jacketless, braces straining, he [Olivier] would carve the roast of beef at lunch, and on Saturday afternoon he would take off with Joan's father, a north-country newspaper editor, to a football match." Meanwhile, Tynan was trying to press Olivier into the next theatrical venture.

The Olivier material is one example of how the book's liveliness extends beyond Tynan. But Kathleen Tynan keeps him at the center (where, of course, he was an expert at keeping himself), while dealing tactfully and sensitively with their often troubled marital career. As far as one can see he was, well, simply irresistible to other women—Marlene Dietrich, for example, about whom he wrote that her masculinity appealed to women, her sexuality to men ("She has sex, but no particular gender"). Dietrich was so enthralled by the remark she decided that Tynan had "understood the whole thing," and she told Noel Coward—upon arriving in London in 1954 for a club date—that the only person she wanted to meet was Ken. Accordingly he appeared at her Dorchester Hotel suite, introduced him-

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self (he was all of twenty-seven years, and to Dietrich looked no more than nineteen) and proceeded to keep company with her for three days. His then wife, Elaine Dundy, was "very good-natured about it," writes Kathleen Tynan. After Dietrich's performances, she would drag Tynan into her dressing room, let him watch her bathe and dress and then take her out to dinner. "I adored him," she told his biographer. So did a number of other interesting characters of both sexes—from the unnamed young woman sitting next to him on a flight to America who, after Tynan engaged in a bit of groping, got up and obligingly removed her girdle; to Ava Gardner; to Norman Mailer; to (at least momentarily) a drunken Marlon Brando, who once insisted Tynan kiss him on the lips as proof of their friendship. Tynan complied.

There are scores of other, equally outrageous activities that, as recounted, give the biography its life. Tynan achieved a sort of distinction by being the first person to say the famous four-letter word on the BBC. With Terry Southern he planned a musical about Lord Byron, to be titled "Funny Foot" (it never got past the splendid title). Although a dandy, two of Tynan's favorite dishes—so claims Kathleen Tynan, who cooked them for him—were shepherds pie and sausages and mash. His fascination with the anal-sadistic expressed itself partly through a treasure chest of illustrative photographs of spanking (both wives were bothered by this "hobby") and eventually in a long-term affair with a woman who shared his interests. As the biography unfolds, matters such as these come to prevail; we become less and less interested in Tynan as critic and intellectual, since increasingly—and especially after his move to California in the fall of 1976—he becomes above all else, a celebrity. The individual talent contents itself with producing such a limp exercise in sexual display as *Oh! Calcutta!*; the ironic, independent mind puts itself at the services of proselytizing for Wilhelm Reich's psychoanalytical theories. Both the writing and the life become ever more devoted to "Show People," who also provided him with the title of what was to be his last book. At least to some extent, Tynan was aware of his shift away from critical reviewing and into celebrating "enthusiams" (his phrase for things that excited him). His thinnest book,

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The Sound of Two Hands Clapping (1975) is made up of little but enthusiasms, from Ethel Merman to Roman Polanski. One of his last pieces of writing was a *New Yorker* profile of Johnny Carson.

By then he was dying, horribly, from emphysema, and Kathleen Tynan's depiction of the "intubations" he endured make grim reading. It is tempting to view the life and its ending as a graphic instance of the corruption of talent through selfishness and self-indulgence, culminating in self-destruction. That I was unable so to view it may have something to do with the even-handedness of the biographer's treatment. "Where might he have flown had he been free?" was her earlier question, left unanswered; but in her eyes he flew far or high enough for her to call him a great essayist and critic. If that is overreaching slightly, he is at any rate a marvelously entertaining writer whose books should not be out of print (as, with two exceptions—*Oh! Calcutta!* alas being one—they are). "Oxford gave me a superiority complex. . . . I think it ruined me," Tynan once opined in a good and witty formulation to which we should be careful not to feel superior.

The Beggars' Democracy

CHINESE INTELLECTUALS IN CRISIS. *By Hao Chang. University of California Press. $37.*

Reviewed by GILES MATHEWS

The last twenty years of the Ch'ing dynasty (1644–1911) were not a happy time for Chinese intellectuals. It was bad enough to find oneself living at the wrong end of a dynastic cycle, when the measured tones of ancient rationalism were being drowned out by the rising din of institutional collapse; but for that circumstance, one at least had historical precedents to work from. Much more disorienting was the accelerating inflow of Western ideas, which cast the whole of China's intellectual tradition in a strange new light and invalidated quite large parts of it—its cosmology, for example—altogether.

To keep Chinese culture afloat in these storms was no mean task, and one can only admire the courage with which scholars manned the rigging. Intellectuals of later generations at least had the option to abandon ship, but for those born before the 1890s, this was out of the question. They had been educated entirely in the native tradition and encountered the West only after they had already reached intellectual maturity.

In *Chinese Intellectuals in Crisis*, Hao Chang has made a valuable contribution to our understanding of this "transitional generation." His book deals with four significant intellectuals of the years just before the 1911 revolution. His is not history or biography, but rather a very detailed account of what these men thought and believed, as best we can deduce from what they wrote and did.

Of the four figures, K'ang Yu-wei is the best known, and the most intellectually attractive. He was a leading light of the "Hundred Days" reform movement of 1898, when a group of enlightened scholars and officials, with the support of the idealistic young emperor, attempted to break the power of the Dowager Empress and her reactionary ministers. The movement was crushed by the empress, and K'ang had to run for his life, but he remained dedicated to the cause of constitutional monarchy. His later career reminds one of the more eccentric kind of British aristocrat. For some years he roamed the world with a teenage concubine, stopping at places of historical interest to compose rather good poems in the classical style. He made money in real estate and (probably) by skimming the contributions of those who supported his political ideals. After 1911 he returned to China, where he buttressed his diminishing influence by firing off telegrams to important people and founding societies for the study of levitation. As well as being an intrinsically fascinating man, K'ang possessed the additional virtue of holding correct opinions about China's problems. The best hope for constitutional progress in China was, he believed, by reform from within the despotism. It still is.

T'an Ssu-t'ung, the second of Hao Chang's intellectuals, also took part in the Hundred Days but refused to flee when the empress struck back. He was martyred (by beheading) and became something akin to a Nathan Hale

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of the reform movement. He seems to have been a dreamy, melancholy man, of a type familiar to anyone who has mixed much with Chinese intellectuals. Professor Chang's account of his inner life confirms one's impression that he was rather glad to rid himself of the world, once given an opportunity to do so with dignity and purpose.

Chang Ping-lin is best known as editor of *The People*, a revolutionary magazine of the mid-1900s. Chang was an intellectual's intellectual; his works are dense and difficult to read. One of them is called "Five Theses on Nothing." The contemporary satirist Lu Hsün—no light reading himself—described Chang's essay style as "incomprehensible." Philosophically he is much the most interesting of Professor Chang's subjects. His development followed a fascinating path, carefully traced here, from materialism and legalism to a rationale for revolutionary action extracted, with great brilliance, from a Buddhist-Taoist denial of the world. Chang was irredeemably Chinese. He had encountered the West, of course, but when he attempted to deal with it intellectually, his marvelous brain turned to bean curd. His critique of Christianity reminds one of those erector-set arguments with which good Catholic children are (I suppose one should nowadays say *were)* taught to refute atheists. His analysis of Western political systems is merely embarrassing. In common with every other Chinese who has ever lived, he did not understand the meaning of the word *feudal.*

The fourth of Professor Chang's subjects is Liu Shih-p'ei, another revolutionary, remembered—in as much as he is remembered at all—for suddenly defecting to the Imperial cause in 1908. Professor Chang is not concerned with Liu's apostasy but concentrates instead on his work as a theorist and publicist of the early revolution. It is in Liu that Western ideas were best assimilated and most fruitful. Though his thinking was entirely grounded in the Chinese tradition, he early on developed a viewpoint close to what we would now call cultural relativism. This enabled him to rid that tradition of much dross and to strike out in quite new directions while also preserving a central, Confucian concern with the moral perfection of society, to be attained through the moral perfection of self. Liu reached at last a vision of an egalitarian utopia, which he seems to have thought could

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be created through revolutionary action. He and Professor Chang refer to this vision as "anarchist"; but Liu prized equality much above liberty, and I think the Khmer Rouge might be waiting at the end of his particular line of thought.

Professor Chang is a splendid guide over this difficult terrain. He has no ax to grind. His purpose is to bring forward some aspects of these men's thoughts, which, he thinks, have hitherto been given little attention, and to show us that they can be divided by quite other criteria than those which specialists in this period usually put forward. Thus the dichotomy of K'ang and T'an and reform versus Chang and Liu and revolution, which can be found in the notebooks of a thousand students of this period, is fed into Professor Chang's kaleidoscope and made to produce all kinds of unfamiliar and stimulating patterns—for example, K'ang and Liu, who were moral, Western, Confucian, and utopian versus Chang and T'an, who were spiritual, Chinese, Buddhist, and world-denying. Professor Chang is particularly good at putting Western influences in their proper place. Here he distances himself somewhat from the minimalism of Thomas Metzger's *Escape from Predicament*, in which Western culture is seen as merely providing Chinese intellectuals with new forms in which to embody their ancient preoccupations. Chang emphasizes the role of the West as a catalyst in late-Ch'ing intellectual developments—an "ideological switchman," as he calls it—making certain aspects of the tradition more accessible and malleable, even as it rendered other aspects nugatory. An example is utopianism, whose perspective K'ang was able to shift decisively from the past into the future and to place at the end of a well-defined consummatory process—an altogether new development in Chinese thinking.

Another point Professor Chang stresses is the value of these men's ideas in themselves rather than merely as props for an ideology. Thus, he speaks of K'ang's "lifelong moral-spiritual quest," of T'an's "devotion to a vision of reality," of Chang's view of political radicalism as "a preliminary step to the final transcendence of the world." What he is saying, to put it rather coarsely, is that these were not just political intellectuals; they were real intellectuals. This point is worth making, given the distressing tendency of current times to see all things in political categories—and late-twentieth-century categories, at that.

Professor Chang's mastery of his material is total, and *Chinese Intellectuals in Crisis* is a very fine book. Why, then, does one set it down at last with such relief? Why do K'ang, T'an, Chang, and Liu seem, for all of Professor Chang's prodigies of research, so little worth our attention? Why—to state the larger question in which this one is embedded—why is it so difficult to feel much respect for Chinese intellectuals or for China's intellectual tradition?

Certainly not because that tradition was shallow or facile. We should be surprised to find it so, knowing that it was built up by thousands of first-class minds over hundreds of years. Among the incidental benefits to be gotten from reading Professor Chang's book is the reminder that, as backward as the Chinese may have been in the sciences of nature and government, they were our masters in metaphysics. The radical idealism of Berkeley and Hume must have seemed very old hat to scholars long familiar with Mahayana Buddhism, while Kant's grand search for order, and his ultimate location of it in the subjective self, would have been no news at all to men raised on twelfth-century Neo-Confucianism. Why, then, are these philosopher-intellectuals so tiresome?

Lu Hsün struck to the heart of the matter. He once described his own compulsive browsing in old texts as "my way of smoking opium." Intellectual activity in China is really a species of dreaming. When one compares the development of China's intellectual tradition with the actual course of Chinese history, one is struck by the near-total disjunction, by the astounding *inconsequentiality* of Chinese philosophy. It was all a vast solipsism, which knew nothing but its own thoughts. The Confucian virtues, for example, had almost no influence on the behavior of Chinese people. Two thousand years of contemplating "sincerity" produced a society in which, as every visitor from Matteo Ricci onwards complained, you couldn't believe a thing you were told. ("There are no murders in China," my party secretary informed me once, with a dead-on straight face.) Similarly, centuries of "benevolence" reduced China to, or kept her at, a level of everyday brutality so appalling as to shock the sensibilities of nineteenth-century British sailors, themselves scarcely a del-

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icate bunch. Anyone seeking an introductory text on Chinese manners and morals would be wasting his time with Confucius. Much better to take up some book on the general features of life in societies of the despotic-bureaucratic sort—Robert Wesson's *The Imperial Order*, for example.

This flat refusal on the part of China's intellectual tradition to get up off the printed page and do things is seen again in the political struggles Professor Chang's subjects involved themselves in. K'ang and T'an both took part in the Hundred Days, which had the support of the emperor. All the leading participants were educated people, steeped since childhood in Confucian political theories. They were swept aside with a contemptuous flick of the sleeve by practiced courtiers, many of whom were barely literate and all of whom knew things about government that the tradition had never discussed. After all, where in those centuries of lucubration about "statecraft" can one find any treatise on, say, the management of eunuchs? Where can one find anything at all about despotic statecraft, which was the means by which the Empire was actually governed? In a closed social system with only a single power center, intellectual activity must always be of the kind described by Karl Wittfogel as a "beggars' democracy," where those who serve the state with their minds are encouraged to race the engine of intellection, but forbidden to engage the gears.

Reading of the endeavors of K'ang & Co., one can never quite put out of one's mind the futility of it all. For all of their earnest engagement, what did they change? China entered the nineteenth century under a lawless, obscurantist despotism. She is quitting the twentieth century in precisely the same condition. There is no strong reason to suppose that matters would be any different if K'ang, T'an, Chang, and Liu, for all of their lofty theorizing, had all perished in their cradles.

Professor Chang points to the religious dimension of K'ang's life and observes, correctly, that commentators have paid too little attention to it. But did K'ang's religion have any influence on the behavior of ordinary Chinese folk comparable to, say, that of the Wesley brothers on the morality of working-class Englishmen? Again, one cannot resist a sad smile when reading that "many [reformist

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intellectuals] were fundamentally rethinking the nature of social and political organization in China." Were they indeed! And where may we find the results of their rethinking? Can the implications of Liu's educational principles be seen in present-day schools and colleges in China? Did these people make a difference? Of course not. In China, one comes slowly to believe, nothing makes any difference.

At last Professor Chang's book leaves one in despair, wondering—as one has wondered so often—whether there is anything at all that can awaken this sad nation from her poisonous fantasies of Harmony and Benevolence. "What can you expect from us Chinese, with our slave mentality?" asks a character in a recent Chinese novel. Splendid metaphysics, is the answer, and very little of anything else at all.

Live Fast, Die Young

KATHERINE MANSFIELD: A SECRET LIFE. *By Claire Tomalin. Knopf. $22.95.*

Reviewed by DONNA RIFKIND

Katherine Mansfield's brief literary career yielded only a collection of short stories, some letters, and a private journal, yet her position in the pantheon of English letters is surprisingly solid. Many critics have in fact considered that position to be unjustifiable. Mansfield's friend D. H. Lawrence insisted "she was *not* a great genius. She had a charming gift, and a finely cultivated one. But *not more*." George Orwell was less generous, maintaining that her short fiction followed the formula of "a pointless little sketch about fundamentally uninteresting people, written in short flat sentences and ending on a vague query." Mansfield herself once complained, "I am tired of my little stories like birds bred in cages."

Her champions have been as vocal as her detractors. Virginia Woolf remarked that Mansfield's was the only writing she had ever been jealous of. Carson McCullers was said to have read a volume of Mansfield's stories literally to pieces at the library in her hometown of Columbus, Georgia; Elizabeth Bowen, Katherine Ann Porter, and Eudora Welty also claimed to have been significantly influenced by her. Mansfield's most ardent supporter was her husband, the editor and critic John Middleton Murry, who was convinced she was a genius. It was largely through Murry's efforts that her reputation reached the heights it did; after her death in 1923, he engineered a virtual Mansfield cult, issuing heavily edited volumes of her letters, journals, and stories, and promoting her as a saintly figure whose short life was chastely devoted to her art. "She should have her rightful place," Murry gushed, "as the most wonderful writer and most beautiful spirit of our time."

Such uxoriousness is especially touching or particularly amusing—depending on one's own attitude toward Murry—when one considers the actual behavior of this beautiful spirit, who once referred to her husband as "a little mole hung out on a string to dry." Given to childish tantrums, she was no picnic to live with; she and Murry spent long periods of their marriage away from each other, and both sought consolation in the affections of other people. Katherine Mansfield's life was remarkable for the way she went about repelling most of her friends and family with her destructive—and ultimately self-destructive—behavior. Part of the interest in her work comes from the reckless character of her abbreviated life: if she had managed to live past the age of thirty-four, one cannot resist wondering, would she have settled down and accomplished great things as a writer? Like Rupert Brooke and Stephen Crane, Mansfield tends to provoke sentimental rhapsodies about immature talent and early death. But the larger part of the fascination in Katherine Mansfield is the titillation of discovering what a bad girl she was, how very much she differed from Murry's "child withouten stain," as he referred to her in a maudlin poem written after her death.

Two previous biographies have tried to make this discrepancy clear. (A volume issued in 1933 by Ruth Elvish Mantz is not usually included with the others, having been co-written with Murry and including material

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only up until Katherine began her association with Murry, when she was twenty-four.) The first book, by Antony Alpers—who is considered the premier authority on Mansfield's life and who, like Mansfield, is a New Zealander—was published in 1953 and re-issued in an expanded edition in 1980; the second, by Jeffrey Meyers, was published in 1978. A new volume has recently appeared, written by Claire Tomalin, a former literary editor of the *New Statesman* and the London Sunday *Times* and the author of books about Mary Wollstonecraft and Percy Bysshe Shelley. Mrs. Tomalin's biography of Mansfield is not essentially more illuminating than those by Mr. Alpers or Mr. Meyers, except for providing more detailed information about Mansfield's medical history. However, as she claims in her introduction, because Mrs. Tomalin and Mansfield are of the same sex, she

> can't help feeling that any woman who fights her way through life on two fronts—taking a traditional female role, but also seeking male privileges—may have a special sympathy for such a pioneer as Katherine, and find some of her actions and attitudes less baffling than even the most understanding of men.

Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life differs most from its predecessors, then, in allowing what one might call a creeping feminism to pervade its pages: while Mrs. Tomalin avoids the hallmarks of feminist criticism—the academic jargon, the wrangling about victimization—here and there throughout the narrative are hints that she believes Mansfield ought to be considered something of an emblematic woman, that her faults ought therefore to be excused, and that only other women can be truly sympathetic to her fate. "If she was never a saint," Mrs. Tomalin writes, "she was certainly a martyr, and a heroine in her recklessness, her dedication and her courage." What shall one believe about Katherine Mansfield—was she indeed a martyr, and if so, toward what cause? Or was she, as Mrs. Tomalin seems to counter-argue, a bold incarnation of the New Woman and a modernist who made valuable contributions to the art of the short story? Was she a scared, self-hating, immature rebel who protected herself with a brash attitude and an allegedly unbreakable commitment to Art? Or was she a peculiarly empty young woman, unsure of having any personality at all, who tried on different identities as if they were costumes?

Kathleen Mansfield Beauchamp was born in 1888 in Wellington, New Zealand, to a prosperous banker and his cool, distant wife. "Kass" was a difficult child—the third of five—tending toward anger, jealousy, and fat; she seemed resentful of her luxurious childhood circumstances and longed to escape them. In 1903 she was permitted, with two of her sisters, to attend school in London, which she enjoyed even though most of her schoolmates disliked her. There she began to develop a taste for Oscar Wilde and the other writers of the Decadent school, she used her gifts for mimicry to set herself apart, and she seems to have had a few homosexual attachments, although exactly how involved she became in any of these is a matter of some conjecture. At seventeen she returned to New Zealand, but her hatred for her parents' bourgeois life and for the expectations they had for her reached a peak: "The idea of sitting and waiting for a husband is absolutely revolting," she wrote to a friend. "I just long for power over circumstances."

Meanwhile she was starting to write morbid

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little stories, dutifully typed by her father's secretary. One was published in a Melbourne literary monthly. In 1908 she succeeded in persuading her father to let her return to London, a most exciting place at that time for a young rebel newly escaped from the colonies: the suffragette movement was boiling, literary modernism was beginning to revolutionize English letters, the intellectuals of Bloomsbury and Garsington were becoming famous. Kathleen took up residence in a hostel for music students in Paddington—she had not yet decided whether to be a musician or a writer—and resumed some of her London friendships: with Ida Constance Baker, a school chum who developed an obsessive devotion to Kathleen and who lived either with her or at very close range for the rest of her life; and with a family of musicians named Trowell, whose son Garnet Kathleen chose as her first lover.

In February of 1909 Kathleen suddenly married George Bowden, a man she knew only slightly. The marriage did not last through its first night (though they were not officially divorced until 1918), and the next day Kathleen went off to find lodgings by herself. It is apparent that she married Bowden because she was pregnant by Garnet Trowell. Mrs. Beauchamp rushed over from Wellington as soon as she heard about the marriage, and after assessing the situation she hurried her daughter off to a spa in Bavaria and left her there. Kathleen had a miscarriage, then busily began an affair with a Pole named Floryan Sobienowski. This 1910 liaison marked the beginning of her life as an invalid, for she contracted gonorrhea from Sobienowski, which went untreated long enough to become systemic, causing an endless series of painful arthritic and rheumatic episodes and, Claire Tomalin convincingly suggests, leaving her vulnerable to the tuberculosis from which she began to suffer a few years later.

Kathleen returned to London without Sobienowski but with a batch of stories she had written about the Germans in Bavaria. Some of them were published by the vivacious left-wing literary magazine *New Age*, edited by A. R. Orage, for which Arnold Bennett wrote a weekly book column. Kathleen, who had begun calling herself Katherine Mansfield, started going to parties dressed in exotic costumes—Japanese kimonos, Russian garb—and receiving guests to tea on the floor of her barely furnished sitting room. Mansfield's love of drama, costumes, and role-playing has led Mrs. Tomalin to consider that a "secret" Katherine lived inside the masquerading exterior; thus the reason for the subtitle to her biography—*A Secret Life*. While Mansfield did love to perform, at various times earning money for dramatic readings given in the style of Ruth Draper, and later working as a film extra, and while she was fond of calling herself by different names (Kass, Katie, K. M., Katharina, Katiushka, and so on), Mrs. Tomalin's subtitle is perhaps more than a bit disingenuous. It leads readers to believe that she has discovered new information about Mansfield, which she has not, and it is also inappropriate because her own narrative proves what a remarkably consistent, unsecretive personality her subject had. Mansfield made a habit of running away from situations which made her uncomfortable, yet the running itself was a redefinition of her one authentic, stubborn, scared character; it was not at all evidence of secret selves. All the costumes and theatrics in the Folies-Bergère could not disguise the desires and fears of so voluble a personality as Katherine Mansfield, as three biographies have by now made clear.

The only person who tried—unsuccessfully—to keep Mansfield's nature a secret was John Middleton Murry. When Mansfield met him in December of 1911 he was still an Oxford undergraduate, a year younger than she, editing an avant-garde magazine called *Rhythm*, to which she began contributing stories. In April 1912 he moved to London where he became her lodger and, shortly thereafter, her lover. From that point on their relationship became an elaborate dance toward and away from each other; for each seemed to be fascinated by an ideal vision of the other while easily dissatisfied with the reality. First they edited *Rhythm* together from their flat, then separated; first they made friends together—the sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, D. H. and Frieda Lawrence, Edward Marsh, Leonard and Virginia Woolf, Lady Ottoline Morrell—then they fell out with them, or used their separate allegiances with these various people to hurt each other. They bought a house in the country, then went bankrupt and gave it up; they spent weekends, together or apart, with the groups at Garsington and Bloomsbury, a summer in Cornwall with the Lawrences, winters on the

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Riviera. They seemed alternately to charm and to disgust the people with whom they became acquainted. Virginia Woolf described a visit to Katherine with "Murry squirming and oozing a sort of thick motor oil in the background"; on another occasion Woolf commented about Katherine: "Part of her fascination is the obligation she is under to say absurd things."

In 1917 the Woolfs' Hogarth Press published "Prelude," Katherine's best story, which is about her New Zealand childhood. At the end of the year she was diagnosed as having tuberculosis, and she fled the panic-paralyzed Murry, traveling with Ida Baker to France, ignoring her doctor's orders to enter a sanatorium. The Germans inconveniently chose this time to bombard Paris, making Mansfield a hostage there for some weeks. When she was at last able to cross the Channel, she married Murry on May 3, 1918, the day after her divorce from Bowden was made final.

Soon afterward, however, "acknowledging [Mrs. Tomalin writes] that her presence seemed to torture her husband more than her absence," Mansfield went to Cornwall without Murry, who had a job as a translator with the War Office. The back-and-forth dance continued: Murry was offered the editorship of the weekly magazine *Athenaeum*; Mansfield, increasingly ill, left for the Italian Riviera on the advice of a worried doctor, then to a nursing home in Menton, France, then back to England, where she resumed and strengthened her friendship with Virginia Woolf. In September 1920 she returned to France with Ida, sending book reviews to Murry for the *Athenaeum* along with letters criticizing his editorial judgment. In May 1921 she was in Switzerland, while Murry was lecturing at Oxford. By this time her several published story collections had secured her some degree of celebrity, but it was her illness and not her career that chiefly occupied her and determined her movements.

She became interested in mysticism as a means of curing the body, specifically in the teachings of Piotr Ouspensky. In October 1922 she decided, in a desperate attempt to regain her health, to join the Russian mystic George Gurdjieff's colony, the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man, at an abandoned monastery near Fontainebleau. She lived there until January of 1923, enduring freezing conditions, exhausting kitchen work, and Gurdjieff's ramshackle philosophizing. (One of his "treatments" for her consisted of building her a loft above the cow shed, where she was told to sit and inhale the cows' breath.) On January 9 Murry answered her summons to come to the Institute, for it was clear she had not long to live. That night, running up the steps to her room, she set off a fatal hemorrhage.

After her death Murry began his campaign to re-invent Katherine, causing many who had known her to feel repugnance for what they thought was an embarrassing and exploitative emotional display. In fairness to Murry, who was neither a good writer nor a good editor, but who did have a genuine love for literature, it seems probable that if he had not capitalized on Mansfield's reputation, somebody else would have; the story of her life had too much sentimental appeal to be ignored.

Everything Mansfield did after she became ill with tuberculosis in 1917 had a feverish quality—was clearly the behavior of a sick person. The friendships she formed with D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, and others were intense and intimate, as if she was aware they would not last long. But her breaks with

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these friends were equally intense, fostered either by insults and rages (she called Lawrence's wife Frieda "a huge German pudding"; Lawrence in turn called Mansfield, according to Murry, a "loathsome reptile"; she regularly abused the tender, vigilant Ida Baker) or by a freezing indifference. Her darting back and forth from England to the Continent seems almost hysterical, as if she were trying to leave her illness behind. She picked up and dropped the often helpless Murry as if he were a hat. Clearly it was not sex, or ambition, or rebellion, or revenge that guided Mansfield's behavior (although all of these preoccupied her at one time or another)—it was physical disease that shaped her life and cut it short at age thirty-four. Claire Tomalin makes repeated claims that Mansfield's devotion to her art was foremost in her thoughts at all times, and surely Mansfield herself would have preferred this to be true. But Mansfield was not born with the constitution to concentrate on fiction for long periods of time, and her steadily worsening illness made that kind of concentration impossible.

The stories, interestingly, bear no sign of the feverishness that was characteristic of Katherine Mansfield's actions. Placid even when they are cruel, rather flat in tone and going fuzzy around the edges in the stories about her childhood, they might perhaps have benefited from some of the urgency and passion of her daily existence. Her work has been compared with Chekhov's, but it has none of Chekhov's lucidity and depth. The best stories, like "Prelude," are fragile and fine, with a rainy-spring-afternoon mood. Most of them seem inauthentic and unfocused—poor proof that Mansfield was the innovating modernist so many have claimed her to be.

Undoubtedly it is her tragic life, more than her tepid work, that compels our interest in Katherine Mansfield. She had bright promise and a complex personality, knew famous people, behaved unwisely, and died too young. While this certainly does not make her a martyr or a heroine or an emblematic woman, one does not necessarily have to be a woman or a literary expert to be sympathetic to her story. The emotional tone of her life can be appreciated by many different sorts of people; combined with a bit of talent, it has, in Katherine Mansfield's case, proved to be of endless biographical interest. In modern literature, if you live fast and die young, apparently you don't even need a particularly good-looking corpus.

Too Few, Miss Mew

CHARLOTTE MEW AND HER FRIENDS. *By Penelope Fitzgerald. Addison-Wesley. $17.95.*

Reviewed by HAROLD FROMM

Penelope Fitzgerald's biography of Charlotte Mew—poet, essayist, and fiction writer during the first quarter of this century—was originally published in England in 1984 and is now issued here as a volume in the Radcliffe Biography Series. The publisher, Addison-Wesley, is committed to hardcover originals as well as to paperback reprints of biographies of women, and the volumes available so far range from Simone Weil to Karen Horney. In all, they are remarkably well made, the present instance a handsome specimen of book production. Not only are the binding, paper, typography, layout, and illustrations strikingly attractive, but the price is modest and both a foreword and a generous selection of Mew's poems have been added to the English original, increasing its value.

Although Charlotte Mew must of necessity be regarded as a very minor figure today, she was well known among the British literati during her time, and two or three of her poems have made it into major anthologies of English poetry. A cultivated English friend of mine, now eighty-five years old, reports that Mew was one of her favorite writers sixty years ago; and only last year Marjorie Watts, now ninety, devoted several pages to an account of her in a biography of her own mother, Catherine Amy Dawson-Scott, founder of the English P.E.N. club. Mew, then, occupies a position, however miniscule, in English literary history. Nowadays, however, one is apt to be a bit suspicious of new biographies of women: has Mew been written about simply as a result of today's revisionary feminist inflation, or is there really something of consequence that this biography has to tell us?

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As one begins to read, the prognosis looks bad: In his foreword, Brad Leithauser bends over backwards to avoid any puffery of Mew's works. "She is a poet all too easily jostled aside, for her voice was often timorous and the effects in her poems tended toward the measured and unspectacular. Her output was not only small but also patchy, and a good deal of what she did manage to produce deserves the neglect it has received. Her grammar was at times unsteady; her syntax often muddled; and her phrasing frequently puzzling, in part because, as she herself readily admitted, she never learned how to punctuate." Nor does Penelope Fitzgerald judge differently: "*Passed* seems almost as overwritten as a story can be, hurrying along in distraught paragraphs, only just hanging on, for decency's sake, to its rags of English grammar." Yet both agree that there *are* a few distinctive poems and there is a small amount of effective prose. Undeniably, a few of the poems are quite powerful; most are unlike anybody else's. And Mew's essay on Emily Brontë is outstanding, both in insight and execution.

Yet why pursue this any further, when it all doesn't add up to very much? Perhaps the "magic" is in the life, a life by no means without interest. Mew was born in 1869 to a middle-class family whose fortunes, never high, got progressively worse, and she spent almost her entire life in London. Although there were some small inheritances, by the end of her life Mew lived in virtual poverty, receiving a small legacy just before her death, when she was too wretched to enjoy it. Her father was an unremarkable architect, her mother characterized as "silly," and her family environment included the servants and schooling that we associate with middle-class Victorian life. Of the seven children in Charlotte Mew's family, only four survived to adulthood, and here we encounter a large dark shadow: a brother and a sister ended up confined in homes for the insane. Both Charlotte and her close sister Anne vowed never to marry or have children because of their fear of genetic insanity. They lived mostly at the family home, though Anne, an artist and antiques-restorer, managed to support a tiny studio. But after the death of their father at a relatively young age, their principal burden was tending their constantly deteriorating mother.

Penelope Fitzgerald handles all her material with grace and easy charm—this is not an academic biography and its author is also a novelist—as well as with insight. One of her running themes is that Charlotte was divided between the respectable, conventional "Miss Lotti" temperament of her childhood (when she was in fact called Lotti) and the more adventurous New Woman (à la Ibsen and Shaw) who smoked, swore, and wore vaguely masculine attire. She was both bold and diffident, depending on which aspect of her personality held the reins. Fitzgerald relates an episode in which she appeared for a poetry reading: "At about five minutes to six the swing door opened and out of the autumn fog came a tiny figure, apparently a maiden aunt, dressed in a hard felt hat and a small-sized man's overcoat. She was asked, 'Are you Charlotte Mew?' and replied, with a slight smile, 'I am sorry to say I am.'"

On the other hand, she was known as a mesmerizing reader of her own work and left audiences almost in shock.

> The effect of the readings was astonishing. . . . They sat facing the little collared and jacketed figure, with her typescripts and cigarettes, who would

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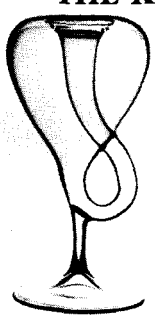

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never begin until she felt like it. Once she got started (everyone agreed) Charlotte seemed possessed, and seemed not so much to be acting or reciting as a medium's body taken over by a distinct personality. She made slight gestures and used strange intonations at times, tones that were not in her usual speaking range. During *In Nunhead Cemetery* [Mrs. Dawson-Scott] had to "pinch herself black and blue," so she wrote in her diary, to keep back the tears.

The mystic Evelyn Underhill reported that "my feet were clean off the floor." Like some Greek rhapsodist, Charlotte Mew herself was transported to another realm during these readings, and it sometimes took her a while to return to the presence of her auditors.

The effect of Mew's divided temperament is poignant enough, but add to it her diminutive height—like that of Charlotte Brontë—which contributed, along with her clothes, to an unusual appearance that set her apart; her passionate need for love, which turned toward other women but never received gratification; her own precarious mental state and poverty after the death of her sister, which put her in a mental sanatorium for therapy—and what you finally end up with is her inevitable suicide in 1928. When all of this is combined with the outcry of her poems, the result is a memorable episode in Victorian cultural history.

Although Charlotte Mew required respectability in order to carry the burden of these natural and cultural crosses, Penelope Fitzgerald is probably right to emphasize her few unsuccessfully controlled episodes of passion—a conventional schoolgirl crush on her teacher, Miss Harrison; an adult intensity of feeling for Ella D'Arcy, who served as general factotum and writer for Henry Harland's famous *Yellow Book*, where Mew published her story "Passed"; and most explicitly, a sexual overture to May Sinclair that apparently threw her into a frenzy of resistance. Sinclair later reported to her friends that she had been chased around her room and over her bed five times. None of these experiences, however, came to very much, and after they were over, Mew seems to have given up altogether on direct expressions of sexuality. Fitzgerald's summary seems just:

> She never left home for long, never became—for example—a suffragette or even a suffragist, never made any attempt to claim political or sexual freedom or defend herself either against society or her own nature. On the contrary, with fierce self-suppression she inherited the fate of the world's minorities and suffered as an outsider, an outsider, that is, even to herself. She was determined to remain Miss Lotti—a lady, even if she made rather an odd one. There is pathos in this clinging to gentility by a free spirit, who seemed born to have nothing to do with it.

Although long periods elapsed during which Charlotte Mew wrote nothing, her emotional life was largely channeled through the relief valves of this very small corpus of work. But unlike so many Victorians whose checked passion was otherwise released through unstoppable verbal prolificity—one thinks of the incredible letter writing of Lewis Carroll and Shaw, the immense poetic output of Tennyson, the indefatigable productions of Leslie Stephen, who was quite as neurotic as anybody—she lacked the sort of drive that might have resulted in major art, although what she did produce was always the work of a literary intelligence.

Though her strivings for success were feeble, and though she was repeatedly rejected by *Poetry* in Chicago, she was fortunate in happening upon supporters who made up for her own lack of initiative. With their help, her work was taken up by Ezra Pound for *The Egoist*, as well as by other periodicals and anthologies of the day. She gradually got to know many leading lights of the literary and aesthetic world: Harold Monro of the Poetry Bookshop, who pushed and published her poems, though he tried in vain to get her into Edward Marsh's collections of Georgian poets; Sydney Cockerell, director of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, with whom she became good friends and who, as she became more and more impoverished, was instrumental in getting her a Civil List pension; Thomas Hardy, who described her, curiously enough, as "far and away the best living woman poet, who will be read when others are forgotten" (a statement, however, made in his final and perhaps dithering years); and many others. After her visit to Hardy she became warmly friendly with his second wife, Florence, who had her own literary aspirations.

Mew's scattered output has been well gathered up in *Charlotte Mew: Collected Poems and Prose* (Carcanet Press in association with Virago Press, Manchester & London, 1981),

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with an excellent introduction by the editor, Val Warner, that overlooks nothing. (About half of the poems collected by Warner have been included in the Fitzgerald volume.) Generally speaking, the poems are characterized by the prevalence of first-person monologue, often knotty, gnarled syntax and rough verbal texture, the use of rhyme in conjunction with constantly shifting line lengths, and stanzas that are not exactly repeated. Much of it, then, resembles free verse without being perfectly "free"—and indeed this failure to commit itself may well be another reflection of Mew's indecisive personality. The poems express intense and frequently iconoclastic feelings and sentiments. Although, for example, Mew was not Catholic, she actually attended Catholic mass during the days she spent in the country with the Hardys, but she comes across as essentially hostile to or revisionary about conventional religion while simultaneously wanting something from it—but what?

> Oh! Quiet Christ who never knew
> The poisonous fangs that bite us through. . . .
> What can You know, what can You really see
> Of this dark ditch, the soul of me?

In this same ambiguous poem, "Madeleine in Church," the speaker addresses Jesus in an ambivalent, passionate way, very interfused with a barely suppressed sexuality and anger: "I do not envy Him his victories. His arms are full of / Broken things." The speaker is almost hysterical with a longing that is both spiritual and sensual:

> There must be someone. Christ! There must,
> Tell me there *will* be someone. Who?
> If there were no one else, could it be You?

In the poem the speaker alternates between a sense of outrage at cool fraudulence and a need to express as well as to receive pity, insofar as she identifies with this somewhat deranged Jesus. Equally mixed up, but again winning the reader's sympathy, the farmer in "The Farmer's Bride" describes his new wife, who does not want to be sexually touched, while seeming curiously reconciled to his frustrated desires:

> She sleeps up in the attic there
> Alone, poor maid. 'Tis but a stair
> Betwixt us. Oh! my God! the down,
> The soft young down of her, the brown,
> The brown of her—her eyes, her hair, her hair!

Death, madness, loss, and frustration are the running themes throughout, with only an occasional positive note struck, such as nostalgia for the strengths of children, who take peripheral notice of the coffin being carried out the door but do not allow it to interrupt their playtime activities.

If the poems can be numbered only in dozens, the essays and stories amount to mere handfuls, yet they express much of this same combination of intensity and renunciation. Although many seem at once both thin and overwrought, Mew's sense of affinity with the Brontës produced a pair of special interest: "Elinor," a story, and "The Poems of Emily Brontë," an essay in criticism that might have been the preface to an edition of Brontë poems had the project not been rejected by the publishers. The story elevates to stern and stony mythology the character of Emily Brontë as Elinor, who forfeits love and even life for her uncompromising vision. In the essay, Mew is speaking as much about herself as about the Brontës in her characterization of Emily and her poetry:

> Everywhere too, the note of pure passion is predominant, a passion untouched by mortality and unappropriated by sex—the passion of angels, of spirits, redeemed or fallen—if such there be. Rarely does any tranquil or tender human trait soften the brilliance of these strange imaginative pictures or relieve their gloom. Through the mist and sorrow of an ever-unsatisfied desire, she looked out upon the world.

Speaking of Emily's "steadfast struggling independence," Charlotte Mew nevertheless finds "sorrow and guilt" in Emily's "vision of the unseen," and as for Christianity,

> It was with the face of a pagan warrior that she confronted life and met death. A pagan above all she was: the centuries of revelation behind her seem not to have won a glance of question or of recognition; Christianity, taking its place with "the thousand creeds that move men's hearts," must have been found with them "unutterably vain." . . . Indeed the religion of meditation and sacrament and self-surrender could never have won a possible assent from one who shunned so resolutely the common pledges and submissions of daily life.

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As much as Mew may have identified with Emily Brontë, it seems clear that she felt herself to fall far short of Emily's toughness of renunciation—just as she fell far short of the toughness required for gratification.

These conflicts in Charlotte Mew are well assessed by Val Warner:

> Charlotte was never able, either homosexually or heterosexually, to integrate the passion she expressed so piercingly in her poems and prose with the life she lived. She lived in a time when patriarchal taboos upon female sexual desire were at their strongest; yet her unresolved sexuality helped to produce the poems, stories and essays which illuminate problems peculiar to women.

Warner sums up her work as "a *cri de coeur* against the meaninglessness of life, if all it means is suffering."

With these observations we arrive, I think, at the heart of the matter of Charlotte Mew's interest for us, despite the great limitations of her work in quality, quantity, and range. The fitfulness of Mew's literary production was a sign of its failure successfully to take the place of life. Although she had real literary talent, her use of it was mainly therapeutic. She spoke to and through her poems the way Madeleine in church spoke to and through Jesus, but neither Jesus nor poems could deliver on their onerous responsibilities.

Alive today, someone like Charlotte Mew could perhaps choose to live a quiet life with her lover, combined with a successful career of many sorts, or, like Adrienne Rich, she would be free to unite her erotic, ethical, feminist, and artistic drives into a fully shaped public life in the world. Genuine gratification on multiple levels instead of unsatisfactory surrogates would certainly have been a possibility. Had Mew come from a higher social class, her problems might have been softened even then, since the latitude for eccentricity was much greater if one were nearer the top. Today, feminist-produced options have lessened the effects of class on women's self-definition, at least in the United States, and sexual minorities, like all the other minorities, have learned what politics can accomplish. Penelope Fitzgerald, however, tactfully weaving these multiple themes in her portrait of Charlotte Mew while avoiding strident politicking, has perhaps accomplished through understatement what others fail to achieve through screaming.

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